

Horticulture.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT SICKLY PEAR TREES.

We have heard several complaints of the early decay of pear trees in Canada. This effect is probably owing as much to the want of drainage and thorough preparation of the soil, and planting too deep, as selecting sorts which have not become acclimatised. It should be remembered that a tree is a living organism, and that it is necessary to pay the strictest attention to the various physical conditions which affect its healthy development, and therefore its durability. The extremes of temperature and excessive droughts incident to the climate of a large portion of the North American continent, are no doubt injurious to the healthful and prolonged maturity of vegetable as of animal life; but much of the premature decay of fruit trees, as well as of human beings, is attributable to the want of rational attention and the ignorance or neglect of nature's laws. The following article we take from the February number of that useful periodical the *Horticulturist*:

I find, on looking about my garden, talking with fruit-growers and looking through the pages of your paper, that it is an undeniable fact that a good deal more difficulty is experienced in cultivating the pear than any other of the popular fruit trees.

The time was, indeed, when pear trees—great, strong lofty trees, too, though the fruit was rather *chokey*—grew around every farm-house, bore cart-loads of fruit annually, and were looked upon as able to “stand more hard knocks” than even an apple tree. Longer-lived the pear tree certainly is by nature; and as standing venerable proofs of this, I refer you to the Endicott pear tree, near Salem, and the Stuyvesant pear tree, in New York. As both of these trees are above two centuries old—by veritable records—it is not worth while to spend time in proving that the pear is, naturally, a long lived tree.

But, in fact, natural pear trees, that is to say, the chance seedlings of the common pear, that spring up by the sides of lanes and fences, are as hardy and as great bearers now as they ever were. What then is the matter with all the sorts whose tenderness our fruit-growers groan over?

Is it not owing to the delicate constitutions which these foreign varieties, bred in a more regular climate, have, and which makes them peculiarly alive to our great excesses of heat and cold?

Is it not true, in rich and deep soils, where delicate trees are forced into a sappy condition, when the limbs are too full of juices, upon which the frost or sun acts readily, that blight and other diseases of the pear are most frequent?

Is it not true that foreign varieties of pear, especially those originated within the last few years, are far more delicate and liable to disease than native sorts of equal merit, raised from seed in this country?

I throw out these queries to set some of your ingenious and practical correspondents, in various parts of the country, at work to furnish materials for answers that will settle some knotty points. For my own part, I have made up my mind that to grow fine pears for profit, we must, in order to save the trees and keep them sound, keep the trunks and leading branches covered with a light *sheathing of straw* all the year round. This guards the bark of the principal parts of the tree from all excesses of heat and cold. I have experimented for four years past with this plan of sheathing, and can say

that I am quite satisfied with it. Among three dozen pear trees now just come into bearing, one-third of them have been kept in straw, and not a single one of that dozen has suffered by blight or other disease; while of the remaining two dozen, nearly one-half have dropped off, and been dug up and consigned to the brush heap.—Some careless farmer or gardener—fond of *shirking* everything that he can—will say, “but who can take the trouble to straw all his pear trees?”

You can, is my reply. Try it on half a dozen trees, and keep an account of the time and labor spent in it. It will amount to a few cents per tree,—not the price of half a peck of Virgalieus in the York market. And if you can gather pears by the cartload—for no fruit ripens better, or has a higher flavor than the pear in this climate—if, I say, you can gather pears every year by the cartload, for only the trouble of strawing the trees, then the blight take you if you are too lazy to do it!

AN OLD DIGGER.

ANCIENT HORTICULTURE.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, when, by the aid of science, we are approaching to perfection, it may be curious and interesting to take a retrospective glance, the better to judge of the progress that has been made in fruit culture. The following remarks on the apple, are taken from a book, published in London in 1597, by John Gerarde, and “enlarged and amended” by Thomas Johnston, anno 1633:—

“The tame and grafted apple trees are planted and set in orchards made for that purpose. They delight to grow in good and fertile ground. Kent doth abound with apples of most sorts; but I have seen in pastures and hedge-rows, about the grounds of a worshipful gentleman, dwelling two miles from Hereford, called Master Roger Bodnome, so many trees of all sorts, that the servants drink for the most part no other drink but that which is made of apples. The quantity is such, that by the report of the gentleman himself, the parson hath for tyth many hogsheds of cyder. The hogs are fed with the fallings of them, which are so many that they make choice of those apples they do eat, who will not taste of any but the best—an example doubtless to be followed of gentlemen who have land and living. But enough saith, the poor will break down our hedges, and we shall have the least part of the fruit. But forward in God's name; graft, set, plant and nourish trees in every corner of your grounds. The labour is small, the cost nothing; the commodity is great; yourselves shall have plenty, the poor shall have somewhat in time of want to relieve their necessity, and God shall reward your good minds and diligence.”

Then, when so many have “land and living enough,” and are destitute of fruit trees, the above advice to the people of England, given upwards of 250 years ago, is worthy of attentive consideration. We would say, the season is now at hand; “graft, set, plant and nourish [fruit] trees,” of good descriptions only, “in every corner of your grounds.”

L. T. N.

PRUNING.

The proper season to prune fruit trees is in spring, when the cold weather is past—say from the middle of March to the end of April, according to the season. Pruning, regularly and judiciously performed, improves the size and flavour of fruit,