

FRUIT PACKING AND GRADING.



FRUIT and garden producers are much in need of a general system for grading. We must have legislation and co operation as well as the enforcement of such laws enacted by our legislature. To-day, we have men authorized to inspect flour, coal, oil, whiskies, etc., placing their official mark on each article inspected.

These are bought and sold by the grade as marked upon each case. Fruit is used extensively every day in every State of our Union, and yet no system of grading or inspection is in force.

Grading fruit is not simply separating the better from the inferior; there is another grading which is pre-eminent, uniform, measure. Our old standard measures of a half bushel and peck have become so old-fashioned they are a mere figure-head with many fruit dealers. The per cent. of fruit and vegetables thus measured is exceedingly small. Barrels, crates, baskets, berry boxes, etc., are now used to carry fruit and ship to distant markets. No fault is to be found with the box, barrel, or crate, but in the matter of sizes specified regulations should be adopted. I have found baskets holding 5-8, 1-2 and 7-16 bush. Each of these sizes is a basket of the original intention. Probably no wrong was intended, but the matter of sizes has opened the doors wide for the perpetration of fraud. The inexperienced, thinking a basket means a half bushel, offer their produce at so much per basket. The buyer brings out his 5-8 bushel basket and wants it filled round full. The farmer figures 20 bushels will fill 40 half bushel baskets, but when he counts the baskets only 32 are found. A dispute at once arises, but being sold and bought by the basket, the producer takes his pay and departs. The dealer fills his 7-16 bushel or 14 quart basket and then has 45 5-3 baskets. The dealer paid for 32 but now sells 45 5-7, gaining 13 5-7 baskets on the 20 bushel. Frequently such dealers are the loudest complainers.

We need wise legislation and the co-operation of good, honest merchants, backed by every horticultural association in the country, against tricksters of this kind. Barrels, crates, baskets, boxes, etc., should be of established sizes and so easily distinguishable that every buyer and seller knows what he buys and sells. The size of pint and quart berry boxes sometimes returned in crates is often surprising. Every manufacturer has his own notion about the size, or else in his calculation must figure on liquid measure. Crates have never been returned to me with boxes of different makes of the same size.

Careful picking, careful handling, scrupulously clean baskets and boxes, free from last year's mold and stains, add largely to quick sales and better prices. Often one poor over-ripe berry prevents the sale of the box, one inferior peach lessens the value of the whole basket; one bruised, brown