

The Province of the Proposed Experimental Fruit Farm*

IN the course of my interviews with fruit growers during the past few months I have had occasion to secure many expressions of opinion on the matter of an experimental fruit farm or horticultural college for the Niagara district. Ninety per cent. of the growers are anxious to see an experimental farm established somewhere in the Niagara peninsula and established soon. Opinions differ as to the proper location; some think that the industry is of sufficient importance to warrant the establishing of a fully-equipped, combined horticultural college and farm; an infinitesimal few express the other extreme and contend that neither a college nor a farm is necessary as they know it all now. A few brief notes on a few of the many expressions of opinions that I have recorded may indicate the feeling of growers in general.

"We require a fruit experiment station owned and managed by the government," said Major F. M. Carpenter, Fruitland, "and it should be large enough to test varieties on an extensive commercial scale. Varieties should be grown in quantity so that the consuming public may pronounce upon merits of variety from their viewpoint. Among other things, an effort should be made to produce better shipping varieties of black grapes. Standard varieties, like Concord and Worden, are thin skinned and crack in the basket, and black Rogers are unproductive. There is room for improvement in grapes for long distance shipping."

Mr. J. W. Smith, Winona: "We need an experimental fruit farm in the Niagara district, and it should be located in a section extending from the flat of the mountain to the lake, where different types of soil can be secured. The Dominion Government should bear part of the expense. Experts should be employed to devote their whole time and attention to the work. We feel that the horticultural department at the O.A.C., Guelph, is of little benefit to growers in this district. For this reason a fully equipped horticultural college might be established at a later date in connection with the farm here."

Mr. J. G. Nash, Stoney Creek: "An experimental farm would be of immense value, particularly in the origination of new varieties. Thorough investigation should be conducted along the lines of winter protection for tender fruit trees. I believe that peach buds are often killed long before most people think. They are more often killed in late fall rather than during warm spells in early spring, as is the general opinion. Many varieties of peach buds do not fully mature in the fall, and the first hard frost gets them. Experimental research would teach us how to meet this difficulty."

Mr. F. B. Harvey, Stoney Creek, offered the suggestion that the work of a farm of this nature should not include apples. Experimental work with apples can be carried on at the fruit stations in other parts of the province. By such an arrangement more area, time and expense can be given to the tender fruits that are adapted only to this district.

Mr. A. B. Foran, Winona: "The Department of Agriculture cannot do anything that will meet with such approval amongst fruit growers as the establishing of an experimental fruit farm in the Niagara district. It would benefit not only the grower, but the consumer as well. Growers are annually sinking thousands of dollars experimenting with varieties, most of which are worthless. This work should be done by the Government, and done in a fruit section and by capable men. The experimental work in fruits at Guelph is one of no value to Niagara growers."

Mr. W. W. Beamer, Beamsville, and others, favor the establishing of a horticultural college in connection with the farm. Horticultural

education, both in practice and science, is necessary to insure progress in fruit growing. We should consider the probable requirements of posterity.

Mr. J. W. Brennan, Secretary Grimsby Horticultural Society: "An experimental farm should test the value and action of all kinds of commercial fertilizers on the various types of fruits and fruit soils. Many growers annually spend a lot of money on fertilizers, and oftentimes we do not know whether it pays or not."

Mr. E. L. Jemmett, Beamsville: "An experimental farm in the Niagara district should be located near good transportation facilities for two reasons; first, so that growers and others may visit the farm and observe the operations thereon with the least possible trouble and cost, and second, so that it will be convenient for investigation of transportation problems."

Mr. Jas. H. Walker, Beamsville: "Among the many problems for an experimental fruit farm is the one of packing and packages. We need more definite knowledge along these lines. An experimental farm would be of great value to new settlers in this district, particularly to those who come here unacquainted with our conditions and the practice of fruit growing. It would attract the most desirable class of land buyers, and thereby assist in building up our country. The Guelph institution, from a fruit-growing standpoint, is of little or no value to growers in this district."

Messrs. W. B. Rittenhouse, E. Hipple, J. H. Rittenhouse, and others in Vineland, claimed

that growers have to experiment personally with new varieties and new methods that should first be thoroughly tested at the expense of the Government. An experimental farm could test the novelties offered by nurserymen, and thereby save money to the individual grower.

Mr. C. M. Honsberger, Jordan Station, ex-President Niagara Peninsula Fruit Growers' Association, said: "The fruit industry of the Niagara district is of sufficient importance to warrant the establishing of an experimental fruit farm on a large scale. We need new varieties of fruits for shipping, particularly in peaches and grapes. We need new grapes of the Rogers type, but self-fertile and better bunches. We must have a farm of this nature established as soon as possible. At Guelph it seems that nothing is being done for the benefit of fruit growers except indirectly; the horticultural interests are neglected. We fruit growers would like to know what they are doing at Guelph in horticultural work. This year, as in the past, circulars from that department were sent out offering fruits for cooperative experimenting, but some of the varieties offered have been worked with and experimented with for 50 years. It is only a waste of time to experiment with Concord grapes and Greening apples; these are standard and reliable varieties, and already known by everybody. We want to hear of something that we do not know; we want something new; we want a horticultural department established along up-to-date lines and established in the Niagara peninsula."

Planting and Pruning Currants

A. W. Peart, Burlington, Ont.

CURRANTS thrive on a wide range of soils, but have, however, a preference for a rich, damp, but not wet one. For commercial purposes as well as domestic, the following varieties of red currants seem to fairly well cover the season: Victoria, Wilder, Cherry, Foy's Prolific, North Star, and Prince Albert. The first four mentioned ripen from early to medium; the North Star medium to late, and the last one from late to very late.

Unless the soil is thoroughly drained I prefer spring to fall planting. Often on damp or low soils the young plants, when set in the fall, are heaved out by the alternate process of thawing and freezing in April. It is more satisfactory to plant in the spring as soon as the land is dry enough to work—when there is life in the soil, and its texture is granular. They should never be puddled in as it stunts them.

The plants should be set five or six feet apart each way. A great deal of hard work is saved by ploughing one way a deep furrow in which to place them. They should, however, line each way for cultivation purposes. Plant fairly deep, pruning the young bush so that it will grow into the bush, not the tree form. In other words, a young currant bush should have four or five stems springing from the roots, not one. Should there be only one, and the borer gets in, the entire plant is destroyed.

Growth is accelerated by cutting away the bruised, torn portions of the root. The richest soil should be placed directly on the young roots, and the poorer at the surface. In filling in the soil tramp it reasonably well, leaving a depression of two or three inches around the plant. Cultivation will gradually fill this in and kill young weeds at the same time. The top of the young plant should be cut back to a few buds to balance the root.

Pruning may be done any time after the crop is harvested and before vegetation starts the succeeding spring. Adult bushes should be severely thinned; those stems approaching the ground should be removed, and those making an abnormal growth cut back to give the bush symmetry.

The bushes should be ploughed in the fall for drainage purposes, and the cultivator started in the spring as soon as the soil is dry. This levels the ground, kills weeds and retains moisture. Cultivate both ways and repeat the process every two or three weeks until the crop is ready to be harvested.

Currants are heavy feeders and will quickly respond to careful cultivation and liberal manuring. Well-rotted stable manure supplies not only the sort of food wanted, but also humus as well, which is so desirable in most fruit plantations.

BLACK AND WHITE VARIETIES

Black currants differ but little from red in the mode of handling. As a rule the bushes grow larger and should be planted at least a foot farther apart. The leading black varieties for commercial purposes are: Saunders, Lee's Prolific, Naples, Black Victoria, Collins Prolific and Champion. In white currants the Grape and Imperial take first place.

GOOD TOOLS to cultivate the soil are as necessary for a good crop as good seeds. Many growers are using the same implements their fathers used. To these men we would suggest the use of Iron Age Tools as a means of increasing the value of their crops. Messrs. J. A. Simmers, of Toronto, Ont., will mail you a Catalog containing full information regarding these modern implements if you send them a post card.

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I wish to be retained on your mailing list as one who greatly prizes THE HORTICULTURIST. I enclose the name of a new subscriber and will try and send another in a day or so.—S. P. Rowell, Montreal, Que.

*These interviews were secured by A. B. Cutting, B.S.A., while visiting the fruit growers in the Niagara district in the interest of THE HORTICULTURIST during January and February. Lack of space has prevented their publication at an earlier date.