

HORTICULTURE

Orchard Pruning

Wm. Walsh, Bruce Co., Ont.

Orchard pruning is done mostly in spring. This season is chosen, probably because of greater leisure before the land is fit to go on for seedling. Practical farmers must take advantage of the early spring.

In driving through the country, many orchards may be seen where no profitable crop can be grown, owing to the dense head of twisted, gnarled and dead limbs on the trees. These would defy the efforts of the best picker to make reasonable wages, even were he given the fruit for the picking. In such orchards, pruning is greatly needed. The farmer often decides to prune because of the better prices that he will secure for his fruit.

Having decided to prune, he hires a cheap pruner, who is handy with the saw and axe, or perhaps the farmer himself, and his hired man go to the orchard, slash right and left, and soon do a big job. Great branches are sawn off about a foot from the trunk, for it is thought that they might injure the tree too much if taken off closer. Down they come, slivering and pulling the bark off as they tear their way to the ground. No wonder that there are so many unsightly farmers' orchards, and that we hear the assertion that the orchard does not keep.

Look at another orchard pruned differently. The pruner thinks that all the twigs should be cut off to let in the light. This is very good, as far as it goes, but many of the blossom spurs are destroyed, and the trees tend to stretch their long, bare branches too far. Chutting large limbs off retards bearing for several years. Pruning should be done regularly for best results.

In many orchards, the land seems to be too valuable to furnish enough room for the trees to grow. Plenty of space should be given and the land should be kept well tilled. Prune to give the trees proper shape when bearing and to lessen the necessity for cutting off large limbs. Paint the wounds made by large branches. This reflects heat and light and prevents moisture from entering to rot the tree.

Making Maple Syrup at a Profit

Marcus Lee, Wentworth Co., Ont.

A good sugar bush, properly managed and equipped with the latest improvements, is the most profitable part of a farm. I would rather have 50 acres of good sugar bush than a 100 acre farm. The expense connected with the bush is small compared with the management of a farm, and the demand for good syrup is unlimited. Maple syrup is a crop that I never yet saw a failure and I have been in the business for over 20 years, keeping strict account of my operations each year.

I have tried many different kinds of spouts. The one I first preferred, was manufactured in Vermont State five years ago. However, I tried the Grimm spout made by a firm in Montreal. I have found it to be ahead of any other spout. They are easy to tap with, far more sap than others, and will not run rainwater into the bucket. In tapping, after having the pails and covers distributed to each tree, we bore the hole for the spout, first with a 2-16 inch bit. Then, after a dry spell of no sugar weather, we ream out the hole with a 1/8 inch reamer. This is almost as good as the first tapping, and we make use of the same spout by driving it a little farther in. The taper of the spout enables us to bore with a 3/8, 7-16 or 1/2 inch bit. These spouts

can be obtained at a cost of \$2.75 a 100.

I use 12-qt. tin buckets, 10 inches across the top, 6 inches at the bottom, and 4 inches high, costing \$19 a 100. The covers are reversible, painted blue on one side, and red on the other. In gathering, if red is up we turn it over with the blue side up. Then we know which trees are gathered. The covers are about the greatest improvement in a sugar bush. I would not have a pail in my bush without a cover. They pay it off only because they keep the sun and dirt out, to say nothing of the saving effected by keeping out rain and snow.

The sap is gathered every day. The sooner it is gathered and made into syrup the better. Saturdays we gather a little later in the afternoon so as not to have much go to waste on Sunday. I have about 1,000 trees. Four men with a team will gather the largest run in five hours. They have gathered 50 bbls. of sap in that time. My gathering tank has a three-inch draw off pipe. I have an elevated driveway to the storage tank which enables us to empty it in less than three minutes. All the sap is strained through cotton as it is emptied into the storage tank.

The gathering pails are made small at the top and wide at the bottom so as to prevent slopping. They hold four gallons each. The buckets at the trees are emptied without removing them from the spiles.

KEEP STORAGE TANKS OUTSIDE

The storage tanks should never be kept inside of the sugar house, they should be kept outside, where it is cool; keep them covered. It is a good plan to have a piece of ice floating in the sap when the weather gets warm.

A sugar maker having a bush of over 200 trees cannot afford to be without a modern evaporator. The evaporator is farther ahead of the old flat pans than the binder is ahead of the cradle. The binder may do the work of harvesting easier and less than the cradle, but it will not make a better sample of syrup than the old flat pans. Some sugar-makers say they can make just as good syrup with their flat pans as others can with their evaporators. I am convinced that they could make a much better sample if they had an evaporator. I have seen a great many samples of syrup, but as yet have failed to see any pan boiled rods that could equal those made with a properly equipped evaporator. Good syrup made with an evaporator is of an amber color. That made with the kettle has a red tinge and a strong taste with not much of the maple flavor in it. In the flat pans and kettles it is necessary to boil the syrup over and over before it is boiled down into syrup. With the evaporator the sap enters at the front end. It is drawn off as syrup ready for market at the back end, within a couple of hours.

I have seen several makers of flat pans. I consider the champion evaporator, made by a firm in Montreal, the best. I used one of them, a 3 x 12 for 15 years; it was good for 15 years more, but it was too small for my bush so I sold it. I put in a 4 x 12 of the same make. It will handle the sap from 1,000 trees in 15 hours. The fuel I use in it is mostly soft coal. It is somewhat cheaper than wood, and will boil faster.

To draw off the syrup I use both the saccharimeter and the thermometer. I have the thermometer register 7 degrees above boiling point of water, which would be about 210 degrees. The saccharimeter registers 12 degrees. That makes the syrup weigh 13 lbs. 3 oz. when cold. I strain all the syrup as it comes from the evaporator through felt filters.

These take out all the lime far better than settling. My syrup is put up in one gallon cans, and I have orders for it all before it leaves the bush.



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