

Fruit Conditions in British Columbia*

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FRUIT conditions are varied in British Columbia and are very different to those which obtain in Ontario and the eastern provinces, complying more nearly with such as are to be found south of the line in Washington, Oregon and Idaho, states which have gained a wonderful reputation during the past few years for the production of enormous quantities of fancy, high-colored apples, as well as other fruits.

District number nine comprises what is known as the Lower Mainland and the Islands of the Coast, of which Vancouver Island is much the largest and most important. This area is characterized by a mild climate for the most part, with a very considerable humidity and great precipitation during certain seasons of the year, the total rainfall at Vancouver averaging about seventy inches annually. For this reason, and on account of the great fertility of the soil, small fruits do exceptionally well all through this territory. For the same reason the range of tree fruits is somewhat limited, and the varieties chosen for planting must be selected with care in order to be successful with them. Several varieties of apples, pears, plums and cherries do very well, more particularly the earlier kinds of apples, and those stone fruits not susceptible to brown rot. Some very fine orchards are to be found in this district, that of Mr. T. A. Bryden, near the city of Victoria, being a good example of what can be accomplished under proper care and management.

Strawberries, raspberries and other small fruits luxuriate in many parts of this district, and have been planted largely in different localities. The section on the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway from Mission to the Coast, and the territory in the southern portion of Vancouver Island are the most largely developed and important. An excellent market is available, both locally and in the prairie towns and cities, and is not by any means adequately supplied. There is plenty of suitable land available for further planting. One of the chief hindrances to a rapid extension of the small fruit industry is the difficulty of securing sufficient help, especially during the picking season. This might be remedied to a large extent by adopting the methods in vogue in the states to the south, where cheap summer cottages are provided for families who are brought from the cities

*Extract from a paper read at the recent Dominion Fruit Conference in Ottawa.

and taken care of on the farms during the busy season.

District number ten includes the various inland valleys of the province, and contains large areas of land where irrigation is necessary to secure profitable crops. There are also several important sections where the rain and snowfall are sufficient to furnish all the moisture required.

A remarkable movement has been undertaken during recent years in connection with the development of the semi-arid or dry areas. Encouraged by the success which has attended similar enterprises in the states to the south, and the results obtained from the orchards planted by the early settlers, where a supply of water was easily available, public attention was drawn to the establishment of irrigation projects in many parts of these valleys. Many thousands of acres have been brought under these systems and are being rapidly changed from comparatively barren areas of little or no value to magnificent orchards of fruit, and farms where large quantities of vegetables and other crops are being profitably produced.

PERMANENT SYSTEMS

Many of these irrigation systems are being constructed and extended in a most permanent and substantial manner by the more general use of concrete ditches and pipes, with steel flumes where necessary, instead of the ordinary open ditch and wooden flume which, while answering the purpose, allows considerable waste of water and requires frequent repair. It will not be possible to go into detail with regard to this feature of the development of British Columbia fruit-growing, and I can only mention as a type of these systems the one under the control of the Coldstream Estates Company at Vernon, known as the White Valley Irrigation and Power Company, which is perhaps the most extensive and important of the large number established in the Okanagan Valley, if not in the entire west. In this vicinity are also to be found the celebrated orchards of the Coldstream Estate Company, containing five hundred and forty-eight acres of fruit trees in various stages of growth, planted by the company as a commercial undertaking, with three hundred additional acres planted for clients. A number of the orchards on this property have been producing crops of fruit for some years, and very large profits have been derived from them.

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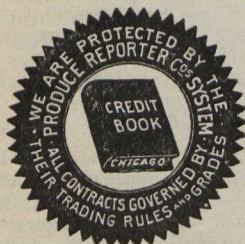
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