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Peach Culture, Thinning and Marketing*

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AFTER the land is given over entirely to the peach trees, regular cultivation should commence as soon as possible in the spring, either by thorough plowing or by disking and cross disking until the soil is well pulverized. The cultivation that follows this will be of the nature of surface work to kill the small weeds, maintain the dust mulch, and conserve moisture. Nothing can take the place of clean fillage in the orchard during the early part of the season.

COVER CROPS

Practically all soils may be materially improved by the judicious use of cover crops. The crops, whether of rye, vetch, Canada peas or even corn, should be sown about the middle of August and permitted to grow or at least remain on the surface until early in May when it can be plowed under to add food and humus to the soil. By sowing as late as the middle of August no injury is done to the growing fruit crop, while the growth of the trees is checked and the wood is hardened off before the winter comes.

THINNING THE FRUIT

One of the hardest tasks for the amateur to perform is to thin sufficiently. It seems like a great waste of energy to grow a crop of young peaches to the size of small prunes and to then deliberately pull off from one-half to three-fourths of them. However, he soon learns that peaches, four to six inches apart, are close enough for the best results.

We must realize that a tree can produce a certain amount of first class fruit and, if more be permitted to grow, the size of the fruit must be reduced. It does not cost any more to pick the fruit at one time than it does at another. It is much easier to handle, pack and market a few large nice peaches than it is to deal with an equal weight of poor, small, hard, unsaleable fruits.

Western horticulture is frequently called the new horticulture and truly is

this the case if for no other reason than the way we harvest and market our crops. The barrel, the sack and the basket are fairly things of the past and now our crop goes to the market in neat attractive, beautifully labelled boxes and crates of the most convenient size possible for the grower, commission man and consumer to handle.

HARVESTING AND MARKETING

Probably no crop grown requires more care than the harvesting and marketing of peaches. The least scratch or bruise soon shows up to the disadvantage of the crop. Means should be provided to eliminate as far as possible all these defects. The picking should be done under a competent orchard boss whose duty

Wonderful Progress

I am much pleased with the appearance of THE CANADIAN HORTICULTURIST and with the character of its articles. It has made wonderful progress during the past two years both in matter and arrangement. Although well acquainted with the publication from its inception, I have never seen it so satisfactory as now.—B. Gott, Strathroy, Ont.

it is not only to direct the work but also to see that the fruit is not allowed to drop into the picking receptacles, but rather is gently placed in as one would handle eggs.

The picking receptacles may be buckets or baskets; however, most of our growers prefer a burlap lined basket that will hold from twenty to twenty-five pounds. The fruit is picked in these baskets, loaded on flat-topped heavy spring wagons and hauled directly to the packing house where it is carefully graded, wrapped in paper, placed in boxes which hold about twenty pounds, and at once nailed up ready for shipment. After the fruit leaves the tree the sooner it is packed for market the better condition it will be in. A few growers

grade their peaches into three grades known as "Fancy," "A" and "B." The boxes of "Fancy" contain from 44 to 64 fruits, while "A's" run from 64 to 80, and "B's" from 80 to 90 fruits. Of course this requires time and skill but this is the system that is making our western fruit sell.

One of the most important factors for the selling of fruit is the local union or association. Every community that raises fruit of any kind should organize and procure these benefits.

The cannery is another important adjunct. It is the only reasonable way to economically handle the over-ripe and poor fruit, and while it may be apart from the association, yet it need not be and usually it is best not, providing that perfect harmony exists between the management of the two concerns.

INSECT PESTS AND PLANT DISEASES

The insect pests and plant diseases that are bothering our peaches are not numerous. They should be carefully guarded against, however, in order to avoid serious injury from their attacks before curative means are used upon them.

Up to the present time, I have never seen or heard of a case of the much dreaded "peach yellows" in the west; however, it may exist in an unnoticeable condition in some of our large districts, simply waiting for proper conditions to develop it. The greatest possible care should be exercised to keep this, as well as other injurious pests, from once securing a foothold in our orchards. Two of our chief pests are as follows:

PEACH LEAF CURL

The peach leaf curl is practically our only well distributed, serious plant disease of the peach and while its attacks are more or less serious on some varieties than others, yet it works severe injury to all sorts. This disease is too common to need description and may be readily kept under control by a thorough spraying in March with a standard solution of Bordeaux or sulphur-lime wash.

The peach tree borer is another troublesome insect that we must be constant-

*Extracts from a paper read at the last convention of the Northwest Fruit Growers' Association held at Vancouver.