

Growing Nut-Bearing Trees

Some Information About a Comparatively New Yet Interesting
Branch of Horticulture

In Two Parts—Part Two

By J. A. Neilson, B.S.A. Dept. of Horticulture, O.A.C.

Inasmuch as nut growing is a comparatively recent development our Ontario Nurserymen have not devoted much attention to the propagation of named varieties of nut trees. There is some interest being shown at present however, and it is hoped that before long there will be a fair supply of the best varieties of native and foreign nut trees available in Ontario. In the meantime those who desire to secure named varieties of nut trees will have to place their orders with nut nurserymen in the United States.

Should the prospective nut culturist not be able to obtain at a moderate figure budded or grafted stock of improved varieties of nuts then, of course, the only thing to do is to grow seedling trees. As previously stated some of these may produce very good nuts. If superior trees are found in any lot grown from seed or if an exceptionally fine native tree is known to exist such trees are useful as a source of scions for improving other trees which are not so desirable. It is a fact though not generally known that nut trees may be top grafted like fruit trees. This task is not as easy to accomplish as is the case in fruit trees, but if the proper methods are followed very good results may be obtained. In a future issue of this magazine we hope to write an article on top-working nut trees by budding and grafting.

How to Plant Nut Trees

Nut trees are rather difficult to transplant and, therefore, it is necessary to handle these trees carefully to get the best results. The roots should be kept moist and protected against the sun and wind. Wet sacking or moss, or similar material, makes an effective protection and should be applied immediately after the trees are dug or received from the nursery. This point cannot be stressed too much as the tiny feeding rootlets will dry out and die if exposed to the sun for only a few minutes. The hole for setting the tree in should be a few inches

wider and deeper than the greatest diameter of the root system. In digging the hole the richer surface soil should be put to one side in a separate pile and the sub-soil in another heap. When ready to plant take a shovelful of surface soil and make a small mound in the bottom of the hole, set the tree on this mound and put in enough soil to cover the lower roots. Pack this soil very firmly with a stick with a rounded end, taking care not to bruise the roots. When this has been done put in more soil and pack again, and continue until the hole is almost filled. A loose mulch of soil about two inches deep should be left at the surface. It is very important to have the soil firmly packed about the roots as many failures are due to loosely placing the soil around the roots. Trees should not be planted when the soil is very wet. Raw ground bone mixed with the soil about the roots is said to be beneficial. If the soil is dry the trees should be watered shortly after planting and if enough moisture is not supplied by rains it will be necessary to water a few times during the growing season. When watering it is a good practice to make a slight depression a foot or so from the trunk and put the water in this depression where it can soak in gradually to the roots and not run off on the surface.

Initial Pruning

Nut trees should be cut back from one-third to one-half at time of planting. This will help to restore the balance between the roots and top, and induces a stronger and more rapid growth. If not cut back as suggested above, the tree will take much longer to get established and, in some cases, it may die.

Care After Planting

While nut trees will grow on comparatively poor soil they will do much better on soil that is well supplied with plant food. For this purpose stable manure, leaf mould, or anything that furnishes humus is valuable. Such materials should be applied to

the ground and incorporated into the soil by digging in with a fork or spade. Weeds or grass of any kind should not be allowed to grow close to the trees as they will rob the tree of the food and moisture required for growth.

Spacing the Trees

Large growing trees like the Black walnut or Hickory should not be planted closer than 60 feet apart, but smaller trees such as the Japanese walnuts may be planted at 50 feet each way. The cultivated Chinese and European chestnuts do not generally grow to a large size and, therefore, may be planted about 35 feet apart.

NOTE—The Department of Horticulture would like to receive information on the occurrence and distribution of all kinds of native and introduced nut trees growing in Ontario, particularly those which yield large crops of thin shelled, high quality nuts.

Juglans Mandschurica

The general growth characteristics of these species are somewhat similar to the other two types but the nut, however, is quite different, being somewhat like a butternut. Because of this it is sometimes called the Japanese butternut. It is the least desirable of the Japanese group and should not be planted except where the cordiformis type will not grow.

Chinese Walnuts (*Juglans regia sinensis*)

The Chinese walnut is being grown experimentally in the northern part of the United States and has been tried at only one place in Canada, e.g., in the grounds of G. H. Corsan, Islington, Ont. The tree is fairly hardy at the Arnold Arboretum, Jamaica Plains, Mass., and should be sufficiently hardy for Southern Ontario. It is believed that the Chinese walnut will prove to be hardier than the English walnut and it may have an important place amongst nut trees in the northern part of the United States and in Southern Canada. The nuts are