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The Thinning of Fruit

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T is only a few years ago that any of us first understood at all definitely what was meant by "thinning fruit." Now practically all commercial growers instinctively think of the removal of some of the fruits at an early stage in their growth, to permit of the greater perfection of the rest.

What was unheard of a few years ago becomes widely talked of to-day, and is the common practice of to-morrow. This has been the history of spraying throughout the apple districts, while pruning has gone through a similar evolution, though in a more irregular fashion.

Thinning as a feature of orchard practice on a large scale was probably first adopted in California, and was soon after applied to apples and pears in the producing districts of the Pacific Slope. It is in these districts that high freight rates and a long haul to markets has made essential the production of the greatest possible percentage of highclass fruit.

Only good fruit can be sold at a profit in western packages and under transcontinental freight rates, but the valuable lesson was learned that care in all features of production results, not in a minimum of profit, but in a maximum of profit; in other words the high expenditure per acre involved by intensive methods produces not a lower profit per box of fruit, but a higher one. The west has taken this lesson to heart and the changing market conditions are bringing it home to the east as well. The British Columbia grower never asks himself if thinning pays any more than he asks whether pruning or cultivation produces a profit. About spraying, especially in those districts where San Jose Scale and the Codling Moth are unknown, and where Apple Scab and similar fungous diseases have never been seen by the average orchardist, he does raise a question, but the cost of pruning, cultivation and thinning he does not question any more than he questions the box package or the wrapping of highclass fruit.

Until varieties of peaches, apples and pears are produced that reach the commercial standard of perfection without pruning and thinning (and such varieties are a long way off as yet), these practices, which go hand in hand, will continue to be two of the most important in the orchardists' calendar.

In the east a similar view of the matter will in the near future obtain. Progressive growers will experiment and their results will shortly lead to the adoption of thinning as a part of orthodox orchard practice as it is now in the west.

HOW MUCH FRUIT TO A TREE

In discussing the questison of thinning we admit that a tree may set more fruit than it can possibly bring to perfection, as the fruit grower understands perfection. Nature cares nothing for the fruit except as an aid to produce seed; the orchardist cares nothing for seeds except as they are necessary to the production of fruit. We wish each tree to carry all the fruit it can bring to commercial perfection, and no more. At the same time the tree must make new vegetative growth consistent with its age and the variety. The third requisite is that it should also form enough fruit spurs for a similar crop in the following year.

When a tree is fulfilling these three requirements, it is performing its maximum duty to the owner. If it falls short in any of them he is not getting his maximum of profit, either immediate or prospective, from it. This ideal is the foundation of our orchard practice.

HOW DOES THINNING HELP?

The removal of some of the fruit at an early stage in its growth helps materially towards securing the maximum duty of the tree in certain definite ways:

First, the average size of the fruit left on the trees is increased; this is the most obvious result of thinning. Trees overburdened with fruit produce a greater percentage of number two apples. The increase in size of the remainder, after the first or second pickings of Bartlett pears is made, is a striking instance of the increase in size when the number of fruits is reduced.

Second, the fruit borne is more uniform in size and shape. On the overloaded tree there is much variation in size, and especially where two or more fruits remain on a spur they are variable in shape as well. The fruits from the side blossoms of the cluster are in many varieties much different from those from the centre blossom, usually being flatter



The Unveiling of a Monument at Dundella, Ont., Dundas County, in Honor of The Original McIntosh Red Apple Tree A unique but noteworthy function took place at Dundela, Ont., during June, when prominent farmers, government officials and public men met to unveil the monument shown in the illustration in honor of the original McIntosh Red Apple Tree. The plate on the monument bears this inscription: "The Original McIntosh Red Apple Tree stood about 20 Rods North of This Spot. It Was One of a Number of Seedlings Taken from the Border of the Clearance and Transplanted by John McIntosh in the year 1746. Erected by Popular Subscription 1912." The occasion was marked by a basket picnic followed by addresses by speakers, who emphasized the importance to the country of the discovery of new varieties of grain or fruit of such recognized merit as the McIntosh Red Apple Tree.