

The Growing of European Plums

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FOR the last few years, the growing of plums at a profit to the grower has been a rather difficult problem. It has been an even chance that, if everything were taken into consideration and all expenses reckoned up, the grower would have been out of pocket. Of course, there has been an exceptional year now and then but, on the whole, the plum business of the last few years has been a financial failure.

Those who were fortunate enough to have a crop in the season of 1906 made good money. Plums were in demand and brought good prices. Some orchards paid at the rate of \$500 an acre.

The outlook for the future seems to be brighter. I am inclined to believe that the growing of plums will be a paying business. There are several reasons that have led to these conclusions. The West is rapidly filling up and that market must be supplied. Other markets also are opening. We are getting better transportation facilities. The canning industry is developing year by year, and this furnishes a market for large quantities of plums.

Another reason that can be given is that the area for plum growing seems to be getting more limited. The time was when plums could be grown successfully in almost any part of the country, but a few cold winters played havoc with thousands of trees in a great many districts and growers have neglected to replant for fear that the same thing might occur again. The great damage and destruction caused by the San Jose scale has played quite a part in reducing the acreage that has in former years been devoted to plum growing. Thus the area has been largely reduced.

These and other reasons that might be given lead us to the conclusion that the growing of plums, for some time to come, will be far more profitable than it has been in recent years. In passing, let me say that, for profit, there is no comparison to be made between European and Japanese plums. Most growers would be far better off had they never seen a Japanese plum tree.

SELECTING SOIL AND TREES

Plums can be grown on almost any kind of soil that is properly drained, but the heavier soils are preferable. I would advise any one contemplating the planting of a plum orchard to plant it on their heavy soil, and save their lighter soils for something else.

Good, thrifty, two-year-old trees should be selected, and, in no case, plant a tree over two years old. Rather than take them over two years old, take good, strong, one-year-old trees.

Plum growers have been seriously

handicapped by getting trees from the nursery that have not been true to name, oftentimes growing them for five or six years and then finding out that they have got a lot of trees that are fit only for firewood. It makes pretty expensive firewood. If nurserymen would be careful only to bud their young stock with buds taken from bearing trees, then they would know that their stock would prove true to name. The planters would be sure of getting what they ordered and paid for. Nearly all nurserymen take the buds from their nursery rows, from trees that never have fruited, and, consequently, in sending out young trees very often the varieties get mixed.

PLANTING

The ground should be thoroughly worked. The trees should be planted not less than 16 feet apart each way; in fact, some varieties would be better if they were planted 18 feet. Planters in the past have made the serious mistake of planting their trees too closely together. When we work around and spray among them we see our mistake.

Do not plant too many varieties. I would name the following kinds to select from: Bradshaw, Washington, Imperial, Gage, Yellow Egg, Lombard, Moore's Arctic, Monarch, Canada Orleans, Quackenboss, Pond's Seedling, Reine Claude, Grand Duke, and Shropshire Damson.

After the young orchard is planted, thorough cultivation should be given. It stimulates good hardy growth. In late summer sow a cover crop for protection to hold the snow and to improve the texture of the soil. This should be plowed down in the following spring. Some growers grow some kind of a hoe crop between their young trees. That is a matter of opinion and, of course, depends somewhat on the fertility of the soil. I, personally, prefer the former plan.

SPRAYING AND PRUNING

Spraying should be done from the first. Nothing helps trees to retain their foliage like Bordeaux, and it also keeps the trees clean and free from disease. When the trees get older and begin to bear fruit, spraying should be done more thoroughly and systematically. How often it should be done in a season depends on local conditions, and the amount of rot to be combatted.

Judicious pruning should not be neglected in a plum orchard, but we fear it very often is. Good, thorough pruning has a great deal to do with the quality of fruit grown.

Something might be said about the picking, packing and marketing of the fruit; but, we feel that this article is already too long. I will leave that feature of our subject for another paper,

especially that part of it that relates to the putting of fruit that is too green on the market.

The Gooseberry

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For some years previous to last year gooseberries, when mature, commenced dropping off the bush till not a berry was left. It was proved here and at Guelph that this falling is caused by the presence of a little maggot in the berry. The eggs which produce the grubs are deposited in the berry when young by a small moth. Last year, the first for years, about 50 per cent. came to maturity and ripened. So I am in hopes that the scourge is passing. One season I thought that I could prevent the moth laying her eggs by keeping the bush sprayed with liver of sulphur, but it did no good.

The gooseberry will thrive and yield large crops upon almost any soil that is enriched with plenty of manure. A heavy clay loam well manured would be perfection, especially for the American varieties. Before a plot is set to plants it should be fallowed and made rich. Set native varieties six feet apart each way.

Mulching gives grand results in a dry year; but for a wet season I prefer cultivation. Care must be taken for a few weeks, just as the fruit is forming, not to go too deep under and about the bush, especially if the weather is dry. I lost three crops in this way before I detected the cause.

Native varieties do not need much pruning for three years. Keep the top open, and if a branch is to be cut, cut it close to the stem. Allow six or eight stems to grow. As soon as a branch grows dark-colored and hide-bound, and the fruit commences to run small, cut it away and allow a sucker to take its place. Fall is the best time to prune, but the young suckers, except those needed for renewal, should be cut away as soon as they are a few inches high.

After testing 60 foreign varieties, I am convinced that none of them is an improvement upon our own Red Jacket, Pearl or Downing. Foreign varieties have nothing to recommend them but size. Their thick skin is disagreeable if they are allowed to ripen or nearly ripen before being cooked. Red Jacket and Pearl are large enough for all practical purposes; in fact, they are as large as many of the English varieties tested.

The presence of large numbers of robins on a lawn is an indication of the presence of white grubs in the sod.