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THINNING APPLES ON THE TREES WILL INCREASE YOUR PROFITS

By Removing Part of the Fruit Now the Remaining Specimens will be Larger and More Uniform in Size and Better Colored—It Pays to Thin.

Thinning the fruit on the limbs is an operation in orchard management that should be more extensively practiced by our apple growers. Some important things are accomplished. The trees will be stronger and more shapely; they will not break or be injured from an over-burden of fruit; the crops of fruit will be more regular; the labor in culling will be reduced; and the fruits will be greatly improved in size, quality and appearance, and consequently will bring a much better price. Thinning the apple destroys a large number of codling worms and other insect pests, and removes many fungous enemies; it controls orchard troubles also by stimulating the growth of foliage and twig, and thereby enables the tree to better withstand such deprivations. These points were mentioned recently to an editorial representative of Farm and Dairy who visited a number of fruit growers in the Oshawa—Bowmanville—Newcastle fruit district.

THINNING MAKES WAGENERS PAY

To our representative, Mr. Elmer Lick, manager of the Oshawa Fruit Growers Ltd., stated that thinning pays in the case of many varieties. He referred particularly to the Wagener, which usually overbears to such an extent that all the fruit is small in size. As a result of thinning, Mr. Lick has six rows of Wageners in a ten-acre apple orchard that last year paid as well as all the rest of the orchard put together. "If Wageners are grown on proper soil and if the apples are thinned on the trees," remarked Mr. Lick, "this variety is one of the most profitable that we have. My Wageners are growing in three feet of gravel on a clay sub-soil."

The value of thinning was referred to also by Mr. W. H. Gibson, of Newcastle, who pointed out that, for the best returns from the orchard, heavy bearing varieties should be thinned early in the season. The work at this time saves much labor in picking, grading and packing when harvest time comes.

IMPORTANCE OF THE WORK.

One of the most enthusiastic followers of the practice is Mr. W. H. French, of Newcastle, who believes that thinning is as important as pruning, spraying, fertilizing or cultivating. He told Farm and Dairy that thinning makes the remaining apples larger and more uniform in size and better colored. "Thinning encourages annual bearing," said Mr. French. "It takes a tree two or three years to recover from over-cropping,

which condition can be prevented by removing the surplus fruits. I lost 10 Baldwin trees during a cold winter some years ago by allowing them to over-bear the previous season. By thinning, the vitality of the trees and the fertility of the soil is not wasted in growing No. 3's and culls."

Thinning should be done soon after the June drop. Remove first those that are imperfect and then the smaller ones. Leave the fruit evenly distributed over the tree. To show the value of the work, Mr. French gave the following information: "Two seasons ago I thinned 100 trees. From a block of 10 Snows, 10 Wageners and 40 Golden Russets, which were well loaded, I removed one-third of the fruit from all the trees but two, leaving these two for comparison. In a lot of 40



A Young Orchard with Peas and Onions Growing between the Trees

In the country surrounding Oshawa, Ont., many young orchards have been planted in the last few years. The fruit growers of the district know the value of clean cultivation and other orchard operations, including thinning the fruit, which is the subject of this article on this page. Inter-cropping is also practiced while the trees are young. The photograph was taken by an editorial representative of Farm and Dairy in an orchard adjoining that of Mr. W. H. French. The trees were started too high.

Spys, there were sixty heavily laden. Two of these were left unthinned, from two others, one-third of fruit was removed and from the remaining two, two-thirds were taken off. From the other 34 trees of this lot, I took off one-third from all but two, which were left unthinned. Part of the thinning I did in one picking and part was gone over twice.

"The results of the work showed that where there is much fruit to remove, it is better to thin twice than once, the second thinning to follow three weeks after the first. It is not quite enough to thin off one-third of the fruit when the trees are heavily loaded; one-half would be better; two-thirds is the extreme, the fruit being liable to become over grown and coarse.

"At picking time, I measured the results and compared the trees that were thinned with those that were left unthinned. I found that the removal of one-third of the fruit does not diminish the bulk, and even when two-thirds are taken off it is lessened but little. The difference is in the quality. Of the fruit from the two trees of Spys which were unthinned and so heavily laden, not 20 per cent. would grade No. 1 and not over one-half of the balance were even No. 2 in quality. Fruit from the two trees where two-thirds were taken off, graded 95 per cent. No. 1. On account of the unfavorable weather that prevailed, these two lots were not sorted separately, but after they were quite badly frozen, they averaged about 70 per cent. No. 1.

AN OBJECT LESSON.

"Last year, I had a good object lesson in a block of about 20 Baldwin trees, which were so high that I neglected going over them. As a result not 20 per cent. of the fruit was No. 1. Fully one-third of the yield was nothing but scrubs. On trees beside them bearing only one-third of the crop, the fruit was 70 per cent. No. 1. These last mentioned trees brought me as much money with one-half of the work.

"All other varieties were well thinned except the Ben Davis. These were well filled, but not being thinned, over one-half were No. 2's. Beside them were some Bellflowers, carrying only a medium load, which with one good thinning gave 80 per cent. No. 1. I thinned six trees of Snows twice, removing in all one-half of the fruit. From these trees which averaged not quite 11 inches through the trunk, two feet from the ground, I had 44 boxes and 3 barrels, the latter being No. 2's.

"The indirect benefits of thinning will pay for the outlay and labor. One man while working on a ladder around the tree can oversee two boys in the centre and two women working on step ladders around the base, each. These five workers should pick fully as many apples as five good pickers in the fall for the same time. The price of pickers in the fall when we have a full crop is 20 cents an hour. By removing one-half the fruit in the summer you reduce the work in the fall one-third. This alone will nearly clear the cost of thinning. With one-third of the work done, one is not compelled to start in the fall before the fruit is thoroughly mature. At the same time we find that the thinned fruit is ripe and ready to be picked sooner than it otherwise would have been. A system that will enable us to let the fruit remain on the trees until it is fully matured should be welcomed by every fruit grower.—A.B.C.