



A Lesson in Pruning.—An Old Apple Tree That Still Has Too Much Wood

Care of the Peach Orchard*

F. M. Clement, Dutton, Ont.

THREE things I would insist on from the first are the following: That the tree has life. Its growth and development then depends on the attention and care you give it. Second, be sure that food is taken in a soluble form, which means that the grower must prepare the food for the tree; and lastly, remember that the cheapest way of supplying fertilizer is by careful cultivation.

The meaning of the word manure is the same as to manoeuvre or to work by hand. The Greeks realized that if they cultivated the land very carefully the crop was increased. In other words, careful cultivation makes available the plant food or makes it soluble so that it can be used by the tree. The importance of thorough cultivation during the early spring weeks cannot be too strongly emphasized; at this time the tree is carrying its load of fruit, producing new wood and forming in embryo the tiny fruit and leaf buds for the next season's crop. That is the critical time in the life of the tree. A single cultivation in June is worth two or three in July.

CHECKING GROWTH

It is just as important to check growth in early August as it is to produce it in May and June. Many trees throughout Ontario were severely injured last winter because of late cultivation or stirring the soil when digging the potatoes or roots from between the rows. This started new growth, which was not sufficiently hardy to stand the winter. A young orchard at Sparta was severely injured last winter because of this. The grower is one of the best, if not the best, in the county, but because he cul-

tivated a little too late about one-sixth of his trees were injured or killed, and I understand that Mr. Johnson, of Forest, had a large number of trees injured because of cultivating or stirring the soil a little late in the season. If the trees are not too heavily laden, sow cover crop in early July. This will tend to check the growth and to ripen the wood and buds.

FERTILIZING

Our best men also differ in their methods of fertilizing their orchards. Here again we have the two extremes of little or no fertilizer, to a large amount of fertilizer applied each year. One prominent grower whom I know does not use any farmyard manure. He depends on thorough cultivation. He claims that humus or a good cover crop such as

clover plowed under and carefully cultivated will give all that the trees on a loam or sand loam require, and his results seem to bear out his theory, as he has produced good crops for six or seven years without using farmyard manure or commercial fertilizer. Another grower whom I know, uses a limited amount of farmyard manure each year, and in the early summer applies along with it about seventy-five pounds of potash and two hundred pounds of bonemeal per acre. He also is getting excellent results, and I understand that he has not missed a crop in the last four or five years.

What appears to me to be the ideal method is to cultivate thoroughly up to the first or middle of July and then sow a crop of clover, vetch or rye or a mixture of them to be plowed under early in the following spring or when the rye is about eighteen inches high. Commercial fertilizer of bonemeal and potash, about two to one, applied at the rate of about two hundred and fifty pounds to the acre, along with this should return to the soil all and more than the crops are removing from year to year.

THINNING

As yet very few growers have the courage to thin the fruit. They cannot bear to see large quantities of fruit pulled off and thrown on to the ground and consequently as yet few of the growers are thinning systematically. A large number practice it a little, but it cannot be said that it is a regular feature of orchard practice. To my mind it is just as important as cultivation and manuring because we lose the value of our early labor by not continuing the good work a little farther and removing some of the fruit that is tending to break down the tree.

In a thinning experiment conducted in the orchard of Mr. Haynes, of St. Cath-



The Same Tree After Pruning Had Been Completed

(Both Photos by F. Brooks, Barrie, Ont.)

*Extract from a paper read at the last annual convention of the Ontario Fruit Growers' Association.