

CULTIVATING THE ORCHARD.



GREAT many oppose the idea of cultivating an orchard after the trees are once set out. There is an idea that cultivation will injure the roots of the trees and so disturb them that more harm than good will result. I presume that from this idea has developed the general practice of neglecting the orchard entirely. No manure, no trimming, no budding or grafting, no pruning, and no spraying. The trees are left to take care of themselves, and the result is plain to all. Fruit growing is said to be a failure. It is all right to raise enough for home use, but there is no money in it.

An orchard needs just as much attention, in one sense, as a field of wheat or corn. The trees need spraying, thinning out, trimming, pruning, manuring, and cultivating. But the exact meaning of cultivation should be understood before anything else is said. There is no doubt about it that by loosening the soil around any plant and cultivating it with plow, harrow and hoe, we greatly hasten and stimulate its growth. Those who do not believe in cultivating the orchard claim that a good grass sod cut off smoothly keeps the soil cool and moist, strengthens the vitality of the trees, and makes them very long lived. Crops grown between the rows of trees rob the soil of nutriment that should go to the trees, and is consequently very injurious.

All of this may be granted, but that does not include the meaning of the term "cultivation of the orchard." Cultivation of crops in the orchard is very different, but sometimes more than this is required. We need to cultivate the crops and the orchard. Sufficient manure should be applied to satisfy both the needs of the trees and the plants between them. Then good stirring of the soil and cropping of the plants will not injure the trees, but will make them grow faster and surer.

As to the question of injuring the trees with the plow and harrow, it may be said that these implements should not be brought so close to the trunks as to be able to touch the roots. Never let the soil get so hard and baked that the hoe will not be able to turn up the soil with a little hard labor. Use the plow as close to the trees as the outside limit of the limbs. The roots generally run just so far, and no injury can be done by plowing up the soil to that limit. Then use the small hand cultivator, spade or hoe. The soil can easily be turned over in this way around the trees, and if kept very mellow it will be no greater work to cultivate the trees than the corn or vegetables. Apply the manure inside of the root circumference, and work it in well with the hoe or spade.—Rural Canadian.