

PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (HORTICULTURAL BRANCH).

ORCHARD INTERCROPS.

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THE growing of crops between orchard trees until they reach productive age is one of importance not only to the individual fruit-grower, but to the economic stability of the fruit industry as a whole. A few years ago a lack of knowledge as to the successful marketing of these intercrops, such as small fruits and vegetables, together with a wave of enthusiasm for absolutely clean cultivation of orchards, discouraged this practice. There has recently been a change in both respects. A great increase in the available market, and the discovery that ear-load production was an essential to success with main-crop vegetables, together with experimental proof that careful men could grow intercrops with financial success and without injury to the trees, have materially altered the situation.

There are, however, certain requisites to success. The soil must be deep, in good physical condition, fertile, and be possessed of adequate moisture. A soil in condition to support only the growth of the trees cannot carry both trees and intercrop without injury to the former. A first step is to get the soil in proper condition by the use of cover crops or barnyard manure.

The climate must also be suitable. Early vegetables are successful only where they can be produced in time for market. Some non-irrigated districts are so dry in the summer-time that many intercrops requiring a large amount of moisture suffer or fail. These points all require local study.

The third important requisite to success, and perhaps the most important, is the market. Co-operative marketing is almost essential in getting a new district under way. Ear-load production, as mentioned above, is often most desirable. Given a careful study of the entire situation, success is reasonably assured.

There is usually a living to be made from the land while the trees are coming into bearing age. Many crops which will bring good returns can be grown between the rows of trees while they are young, but it should always be remembered that the young trees are of first importance, and upon their present health and vigour depends the future usefulness of the orchard.

Intercropping of young orchards is generally discouraged for the reason that the trees are likely to be neglected or misused and the soil depleted of plant-food and moisture. It is by injudicious cropping, however, that young orchards are often most seriously injured. Extra care should be taken to maintain the fertility of the soil by the application of manure and fertilizers.