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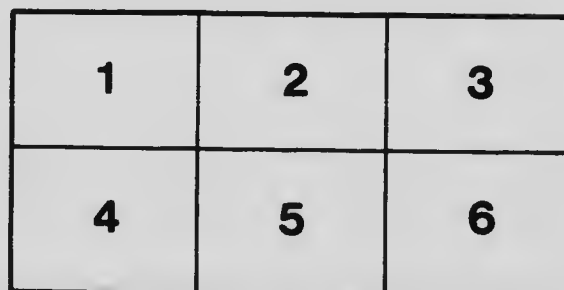
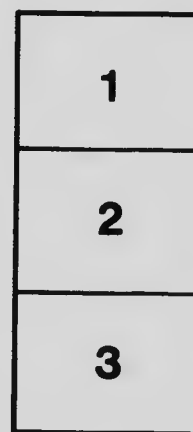
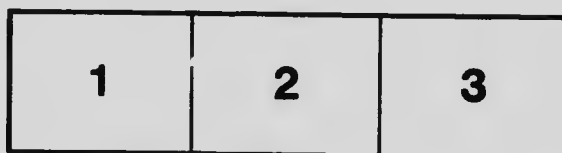
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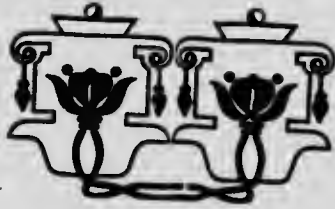
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INSTITUTE

GROWING PLUMS IN MANITOBA



Manitoba Agricultural College
Winnipeg, Canada

Published by the authority of
Hon. Geo. Lawrence, Minister of Agriculture and Immigration

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AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE.

Winnipeg, Man.

October 25rd, 1914

Hon. George Lawrence,
Minister of Agriculture,
Winnipeg.

Sir:—

This circular is a reprint of a paper delivered by Mr. A. P. Stevenson, Dunstan, Man. before an Annual Meeting of the Manitoba Horticulturists' and Forestry Association at the Agricultural College. As it contains much information of value to the farmers of Manitoba I recommend its publication.

W. J. BLACK,
President

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Growing Plums in Manitoba

The culture of the wild plums of Manitoba is one of the most profitable and interesting branches of fruit growing, and the Manitoba fruit growers would do well to turn their attention more in this direction than they have in the past.

The peculiar quality or character of the common wild plum is too well known to need elaborate description here. As a rule the skin is thick, tough and nerid, the size is small and though the juice and pulp may be quite sweet, the bitter and astringent properties about the pit and skin make them unpalatable, especially for cooking.

A large number of the varieties that have been brought under cultivation while having the same general appearance are entirely different in quality. The size is increased, the skin is thin and not astringent, the pit small and free from acid, and the pulp is thick, firm, meaty and sweet. In its wild state the plum is simply a bag of juice. The trees are not long lived under cultivation but no fruit trees bear more abundantly, they are equally as reliable in this respect as the apple. The trees have also been charged with great liability to insect depredations and non-bearing habits from their liability to plum pocket instead of fruit. In an experience of over twenty five years with the improved native plum, I have never seen the vigor nor vitality of the trees materially injured by insects.

In regard to plum pocket we notice that this is the most serious and prevalent disease affecting the plum. It is found on trees in the native thicket as well as in the improved varieties in the orchard. The Cheney of all the cultivated varieties being more subject to this trouble than any of the others we have in cultivation.

No remedy for the difficulty has yet been found except to gather and destroy the fungus growths or pockets. Some authorities state that the difficulty is a climatic one, and I am also inclined to this view from the fact that some seasons plum pocket is entirely absent from the trees. It is not classed as contagious.

About twenty five years ago we planted out our first plum orchard consisting largely of Russian varieties such as, Early

Red, Long Blue, White Nicholas, and Voronesh yellow, these made fair growth for a few years, but were all finally consigned to the brush plums being lacking in hardiness more especially in fruit buds, the buds being frozen every winter. Our second plum orchard was planted out entirely with varieties of the improved native American and Nigra group of plums. In passing, I may say that the wild Manitoba plum is supposed to belong to the Prunus Nigra group while the native wild Minnesota plum belongs to the Prunus Americana group.

We have trees belonging to both groups in our orchard and if we except the Aitken, fail to notice much difference between the two groups.

The following notes on the behavior of some of the named improved native plums that have fruited with us here in Manitoba may be of some interest to intending planters.

Chippewa; This is a dwarf hardy variety from Wisconsin, fruit of good quality but too small to grow for the market.

Newton Egg; fruit of fair quality but too small.

Ludloff's Long Red; a hardy, prolific bearer of plums of poor quality.

Rockford; fruit excellent in quality, but tree lacks vitality and is short lived.

Rollingstone; not a success with us, tree not altogether hardy, fruit small but of good quality.

Cheney; possibly the best all round variety in our orchard. The fruit is large round, not astringent, fresh deep yellow, juicy, clingstone, color deep red, season early September, tree a strong extra hardy grower but limbs very liable to split down in the crotches.

Yosemite; fruit large and of dull purplish red, some astringency but of good quality, prolific, hardy, season late September, too late for general planting.

Aitken; fruit large deep red, clingstone, no astringency, quality fair, the tree is only fairly productive, season early September, extra hardy and vigorous.

Wyant; very hardy, fruit large oblong, color deep red, skin rather thick, some astringency, flesh juicy sweet, freestone, season mid September, very prolific but fruit occasionally injured by fall frosts. This is one of the leading varieties in Iowa.

Growing Plums in Manitoba.

Weaver; tree strong hardy grower, but discarded long ago on account of fruit ripening too late.

Desota; this tree was quite hardy with us but had also to be thrown out on account of the late ripening and qualities of the fruit.

Wood; very hardy, fruit medium size almost round, a prolific bearer, season early September.

Bixby; fairly hardy, fruit medium, color yellow, flesh juicy, tender, sweet, no astringency, quality good, season early September.

Odegard; very hardy, medium size color red, fruit oblong, quality fair, season second week in August. The strongest point about this variety is its early ripening it being the first of all to ripen its fruit on our grounds. The tree is of slow growth and dwarf habit, specimens on our grounds eighteen years old are only now six feet in height.

Surprise; fairly hardy, this is one of the newer varieties originated at Sleepy Eye Minn., is of large size, bright red color, good quality, it will keep longer after being ripe than any of our plums, season mid September

In planting out any of the hardy improved plums it is important that they be grafted on native plum stock. In many of the nurseries of the south and east the Myrobolan and Marianna stocks are used. The improved native varieties budded or grafted on these stocks make fine trees for the nursery, but the union is not a good one, and the roots will usually die the first hard winter. These stocks are imported by nurserymen from France and Texas, they can be bought cheaply, and are absolutely worthless for Manitoba conditions, but if budded or grafted on our hardy native stocks they will make long lived hardy and fruitful trees, which will be a source of profit to the owner. It is often desired to remove or transplant some wild variety from their native thicket. This is not usually a very successful operation, and as the plum does not come true from seed, probably the easiest and best way to get true trees of a desirable wild variety is by root cuttings. To do this uncover the lateral roots of the wild plum tree in the late fall, cut them into lengths about six inches long, heel them in the ground for the winter and plant out in the spring. Trees from these root cuttings will be true to name and being of their own roots all suckers from them will be true to name, while suckers from grafted trees are of little or no value. The plum is our most valuable

native fruit and will perhaps be so for many years. Wild plums of many types some of them of very good quality are found growing over a large part of Manitoba. Many of the thickets contain trees bearing fruit of a size and quality that make them worthy of propagation and cultivation in the home garden, which can be done without much trouble or experience in the manner above described.

In planting a plum orchard it will be found of advantage to mix two or three varieties together. It is a mistake to plant only one variety as the blossoms are better fertilized in a mixed plantation. We advise planting on any good land that will grow wheat which is well drained, preferably on a northern slope as this will help to guard against early frosts. Good results are obtained on level locations by planting ten feet apart each way and considerably deeper than they stood in the nursery, and giving good culture the first six years; afterwards they may be mulched sufficiently heavy to keep down the weeds. Trees should be headed low not more than a foot to eighteen inches high, as exposed trunks are liable to sunscald. Prune very little, considerably less than with the apple and during the month of June it is absolutely essential to the successful growing of this fruit that protection in the form of a shelter belt or wind break be given. In the fall it will be well to hill up the trees about six to eight inches with earth to protect from mice in winter and wrap the trunks with any old sacking, from the ground up into the limbs, to protect from rabbits and sunscald, remove in late spring and level the soil around the tree.

That is my short paper in brief. I may say I have not mentioned another plum which is sometimes called a Cherry—half Plum, half Cherry, a cross-breed; it is doing well with us. I may say it is a cross between the Plum and the wild Sand Cherry. We are indebted to our friends in Minnesota for it; it is very good for the purpose of cooking. The true cherry will not grow with us here; we have some half-breeds such as Prof. Hansen of Dakota has been experimenting with. We have one which has been bearing fruit for a couple of years, the De Topa; that is a cross between a wild Sand Cherry and the Italian Prune; is like a little plum or a big cherry, of excellent quality, and we find that it ripens early. That is to say, our seasons are sufficiently long to ripen its fruit. That is important when we take into consideration that the season is too late usually for the fruit to ripen. There are a number of others, very important

and very interesting indeed; we are indebted to our friends across the way for them.

I might say that this matter of growing Plums and improving our native plum has been greatly neglected. What little that has been done has been done by private experimenters. Of course, in that case they have not a great deal of time to devote to it, but there is no doubt that there is no fruit that offers such an inducement for improvement, as our native plums.

There are some varieties which can be found growing wild, all over, and if the work was taken up and these wild varieties classified, much good could be done. On the other side of the line all those wild plums originated from the natives, and I do not see why the same work cannot be carried on here. I might say that they have a splendid organization which is being carried on in Minnesota, but it has been neglected here, except by a few private individuals who have taken it up voluntarily.

