

Horticulture.

PICKING, PACKING AND MARKETING.

Suggestions by One who has been Nearly a Half Century a Horticulturist.

BY J. M. HINSON.

When your fruit is ready for gathering, packing and marketing great care and judgment should be used. No matter what the variety, it should be picked carefully and the stems left in the fruit. Of some varieties the trees should be gone over carefully and the matured fruit picked and that not fully matured left for the future picking. Great care should be used not to expose picked fruit to the sun, and if the sun be hot it should be put in the shade and allowed to cool off before packing. Winter apples should be put in bins or piles on the floor and allowed to go through a sweat before being packed.

All fruit should be assorted as to size and quality before being packed, and each grade packed and marked separately. It is a very important thing that the variety and quality of fruit be marked on each package, for each time a box of fruit is opened detracts from its value as one buyer seeing a box has been opened thinks some previous purchaser has rejected that box, so he does not want it. A brand of fruit that is honestly packed, graded and marked, soon becomes known to the buyers and commands a preference, if not a higher figure in the markets. Much of the fruit distributed from the state goes into distant markets where quality is the first consideration and price the second, and a poor quality is not wanted at any price.

One thing I have always contended for is that a farmer should have a variety of interests, cows, poultry and hogs. The young pigs will thrive and do well on your small and inferior fruit, thus getting you more money for your good fruit and they should be turned off before getting too old, for old hogs do not do so well on fruits. Your poultry will help to keep insects and worms off your trees and vines, and their eggs will keep your butcher's bill down. Your cows will do well on those small potatoes that ought not to go into the middle of your sacks.

After your fruit is all ready and you get a satisfactory price at home for it and you sell, then we have no further advice to give; but if you have to ship it off to market, find some good reliable party to sell it for you. My observations and practical experience teaches me that the party who puts his goods into market in first class shape and into the hands of reliable men, gets better returns than the one who sells sometimes and ships sometimes, for any one buying expects to make more than your commission merchant charges and then if the market is dull and low, the buyer will not buy; but

if the market is on the advance he is always ready, and by shipping regularly, you get the ups as well as the downs and if you have a good brand of fruit and get a reputation for it you will find no trouble in getting the best price going.

SEATTLE, WASH.

PRUNE DRYING.

An Address Delivered at the Northwest Fruit Growers' Convention, Held at North Yakima, Jan. 19-20, '97.

BY J. P. M'INN.

Prune drying in Washington, Oregon and Idaho is yet in its infancy, but I firmly believe that if more attention were paid to it, that our horticulturists would be in a better condition financially than they now are.

My first experience in drying prunes was three years ago this last fall. I had in bearing then 15 acres of Italians and one acre of silver prunes. As I was unable to dispose of them in the green state, I decided to build a dryer. I went to Vancouver, Washington and studied the dryer built by C. J. Shaw. I then came home and built my dryer after his plans. It worked like a charm, but I soon found it deficient in capacity. The next year I enlarged it one third, expecting it to do a third more work, but found that I had made a big mistake, and that I could not get sufficient heat to make it work successfully. I again visited Vancouver and found that in extending I had made it too long for the one furnace.

It was then 50 feet long. I came home, cut the dryer in two and built the smoke stack in the center and another furnace in the other end, and it now again worked most perfectly and with only the same quantity of wood for the two furnaces as was used in the one. I can now dry 15,000 pounds of green prunes every 24 hours with only one cord of wood.

PICKING.

In gathering I first go over the orchard and pick up all fallen fruit and then after that I go over it once a week and shake the trees lightly, gathering up all that falls to the ground. In this way it takes about five weeks to clean up the orchard. (One of your leading horticulturists here told me yesterday that the "Yakima prunes would not be shook," and had to be picked from the tree. (Your prunes may be more stubborn than ours.)

After the fruit is gathered they are graded into four grades, 30's to 40's, 40's to 50's, 50's to 60's and 60's to 70's. They

are then dipped in concentrated lye water, using 5 lbs of lye to 100 gallons of water, and then rinsed thoroughly in clean water, and are then spread on the trays ready to go into the dryer. Care should be taken in dipping the fruit. Leave then in the solution just long enough to crack the skin—about four to six seconds. Your fruit should be thoroughly ripe, as it dries much more rapidly, with less heat and has a much better color after coming out of the sweat.

The French prune takes 12 to 18 hours, the Italian 18 to 24 and the silver 24 to 30 to dry. The difference in time, of course, is in the size of the prunes. After coming out of the dryer, the prunes are put into large bins, about two feet deep. It is best to have them in dark rooms, as it gives them a better color and flies and other insects will not be as liable to bother them. They should be stirred every third day for two or three weeks, until they are thoroughly through the sweat.

PACKING.

I am a firm believer in putting them up in neat boxes and packages. I first line the box with good paraffine paper—not cheap stuff—and placing the box top down, I "thumb in" the first two layers and then fill the box well, nailing on the bottom of the box under good pressure. There is a difference of one-half a cent per pound between prunes packed in boxes and those in sacks and on account of this, some eastern dealers prefer the sacked goods.

I overlooked the second grading. This is done after they come out of the dryer.

My advice is for growers to put out Italians instead of the French. The silvers are a good drying prune, but the market can be easily over-stocked.

Too much care cannot be taken in putting up your fruit in proper shape. The extra work will repay you many fold.

Undoubtedly the extreme cold weather of November did a great deal of damage to fruit trees throughout this state, Idaho and Oregon. Yet taking the country as a whole, the amount of damage will be hardly perceptible in retarding the development of the fruit industry. The conditions this spring have so far been exceptionally favorable to fruit, and when the blossoms come out it will be after the usual time of frosts and a larger crop of fruits of all kinds will be harvested this fall than ever before. The prune crop is likely to be twice as large and nearly every other kind of fruit will show a substantial increase.

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