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THE GROWING OF DATES

A Visit to the Date Farm Shows the Venture to Be a Successful One

The Date Trees Under the Care of E. F. Chumard Are Doing Fine and Will Bear This Year. The Success of the Farm is Very Gratifying.

Recently we had occasion to visit in the neighborhood east of Heber and while in that vicinity called on our friend, E. F. Chumard, at his date farm. Many of our readers will be surprised to learn there is such a thing as a date farm in this Valley and all of them would be if they should visit the farm itself and see what a splendid success is being made of date growing in our Valley. We confess we were very much surprised with what we saw in the way of demonstrated date growing as well as what we learned of the outlook for this kind of fruit.

Mr. Chumard, of course, is enthusiastic over the prospect for date growing and naturally feels elated over the manifest success that has attended his efforts. In an hour or more spent at his place, three miles east of Heber, he showed us over his place and explained many things of interest. From him we learned that the experiment was undertaken and is being carried on by the California Date company, a corporation organized under the laws of Arizona, but whose principal place of business is at Manhattan, Kansas. This company has already spent more than six thousand dollars in their operations and expect to spend several thousand more if necessary to give the business of date growing a thorough test. They first began operations in their present location in the winter of 1903. They bought a tract of land and having previously sent to Africa for a number of date trees got ready to set them out in the spring of 1904. The first shipment to arrive consisted of 156 trees all of the Deglet Noor variety. These came in June, 1904, and the work of transplanting them to their present location was completed on June 26th of that year. The date palm is a tree that requires frequent irrigations and is sensitive to any neglect along that line. For this reason the long journey from the home of their native in Africa to their new home at Heber was a very trying experience for them. Generally about 50 per cent. of the plants die as the result of such shipment and its resulting three to six months out of the ground.

But out of the entire shipment of 156 trees only seven have succumbed from all causes, leaving 149 trees in as clean, thrifty and growing a condition as anyone could ask to see. Of course the hard experience of such a shipment practically robbed the plants of a year's growth, as very little could be expected from them in that line during the season of 1904. It takes a year after transplanting under such conditions for them to grow a new root system sufficient to support the trunk and start a top growth. But during the season of 1905 they made such splendid headway that Mr. Chumard made up his mind he was going to grow some dates during the present year. So he made all preparations for pollinating the blooms when they should appear last spring. When the proper season arrived sure enough the blooms ap-

peared. In setting a crop of dates on the palm trees it is necessary to have them early enough to insure their ripening to maturity and making perfect fruit. It is therefore necessary to have the blooms come as early as possible and to pollinate only the early blooms. Mr. Chumard's dates began to bloom about the tenth of April last and by the first of May he had pollinated 107 blooms on 56 different trees. These 107 blooms are now fine bunches of dates, averaging probably ten pounds each in weight. Several of the trees have two bunches each and some of them three. He says some of the trees produced as high as seven blooms each, but most of them were too late to do well. He also exercised his judgment as to which trees should bear dates and permitted only the largest and thrickest to do so. Nearly seven hundred blooms appeared on the trees in all during the season. However, not nearly all the trees bloomed or made any effort to produce dates. Quite a few of them and mostly among the most thrifty, put out shoots or suckers as they are called. These are what makes the date trees and in this way alone is the true fruit bearing tree propagated. Some of these trees have as many as eight of these suckers growing from their roots. As these suckers will all be ready to set out in four years and will be worth at least five dollars a piece at that time it is plain that date palms are quite profitable even if they only grow suckers.

Mr. Chumard explained many things about date growing and said he had learned much in regard to it in his experience at his present place. The trees as he has them set figure out 48 to the acre and he says he never saw or heard of them doing any better or even as well in the old world as they do here. Over there they very seldom produce dates until they are 9 or 10 years old, while these, figuring them at five years old in the spring of 1904, would make them seven years old last spring. From this at least one year can be deducted for the stunt and injury they sustained in transplanting from Africa to California and laying six months out of the ground and without water. So it is Mr. Chumard's hope that with the suckers produced here he can have bearing date trees in seven years from the time the shoots appear above the ground or two years after they are removed from the parent tree. Speaking of the possible profits of the business Mr. Chumard told us to do our own figuring. He said he had often seen 250 pounds of dates growing on a single tree, but for a sure thing he put the average at 100 pounds per tree for a ten to fifteen year old tree. With 48 trees per acre this would make 4800 pounds of dates. The variety he was speaking of was the Deglet Noor, which is the finest date produced and readily brings 50 cents per pound retail in the American market. At these figures \$2400 per acre would be realized. This can be cut in two a

time or two for contingencies and still leave a very comfortable margin. And after the trees get to be ten years old or such a matter they produce dates and grow suckers at the same time. It is no uncommon thing for a large date tree to grow twenty or more of these shoots at once. With the development of the date growing business it is quite probable that the price of this nursery stock will rule very high. In the first place the price must rule high on account of the very great expense of getting them here from Africa.

Another reason will be the manifold advantages the home grown stock will have over the imported. It will not be damaged by the long trip and being out of the ground for several months and the purchaser can look at the parent tree and see exactly what he is getting. Taking all these facts into consideration Mr. Chumard and his partners in the date growing business can feel assured of having a good thing in their venture. Mr. Chumard told us the Deglet Noor was the most difficult date to grow of all those produced anywhere. It has the longest growing season and requires the most heat. For this reason he is apprehensive that exceptionally cool summers may occur in this Valley and this variety fail to ripen its crop fully at such times. The Deglet Noor however is the choicest variety grown and it is an axiom that all other varieties will do excellently and ripen fully in localities where it only matures occasionally. This present crop being their first product Mr. Chumard is watching them very carefully and studying their every development. He estimates that of the 107 bunches now growing on his trees he will ripen at least 800 pounds of dates provided they all mature properly. He says the unusually large amount of moist and sultry weather we have had during this summer has been a very unfavorable condition for dates do best in a dry heat. He is therefore anxious for this kind of weather to give way to the drier sort even if the temperature does not go as high. The dates are beginning to turn color and it is his opinion that in a month or six weeks they will be quite well ripened. Should he succeed in getting 800 pounds of dates from his present crop they will be worth at least \$400.00. Add this to the hundred or more shoots that are growing from his trees and he has quite a showing of results in the way of saleable products at his date farm. He has alfalfa planted in strips between the rows of date trees, but says he will plow it all out this winter, as he finds the roots of the palms are reaching out in all directions and will need the soil now occupied by the alfalfa. Next year he expects great results both in the growth of the trees and shoots and in the production of dates. He irrigates his palms every week during the summer months and thus keeps the ground wet almost all the time. It is very clear that the soil where his principal date farm is located is well adapted for their growth. The palms are all thrifty and healthy looking and are certainly looking fine and growing fast. They present a most marked contrast to those on the government date farm at Mecca, which we visited last June. Over there everything appeared to be either dead or dying. Very little new growth was to be seen and only two or three little stunted bunches of dates in the whole ranch. Our observation at the time was that the principal cause was the poverty of the soil and the unfavorable location on account of hard winds. We learn now that this date farm is to be moved to

the Yuma Valley. We are glad of it, for we would be glad to see those poor date trees given a chance for their lives. But to return to Mr. Chumard and his operations. In addition to his date farm we have already described he has another consisting of 300 trees located in the townsite of Heber. This was planted in the spring of 1905, the work being completed in April of that year. These plants seem to be doing fairly well, but it is the opinion of those versed in such matters that they are on land that is too heavy and stiff for them. Mr. Chumard is seriously contemplating moving them onto his farm on land adjoining his other date trees. Taken all together the date growing experiment in which Mr. Chumard and the California Date company is engaged is a most interesting one and is more than likely to prove of the utmost importance. They are exhibiting the true spirit and courage of the pioneers and are devoting an amount of energy, ability and capital to the enterprise that will give it a thorough test. Their success will mean thousands to them, but it can very easily mean millions to this Valley. We hope their efforts will be crowned with an abundant success and that they may prove Imperial Valley to be, as experts have declared, the finest date country on earth.

WORK COMMENCED

Monday Morning to Clear Away Ruins of Ice Plant

W. F. Holt was in town last week and made arrangements to have the debris of the ice and cold storage plant which burned the night of August 15th, removed and Monday morning Dr. Blackinton put a force of men at work hauling away such of the building as was rendered useless and sacking and storing as much of the inside packing as could be saved.

Mr. Holt informed us that work on

rebuilding the plant would be commenced at an early date and every endeavor would be made to have the plant completed as soon as possible.

The plant will be rebuilt the same size as before, but the storage capacity will be greatly enlarged by doing away with the creamery rooms and making of them an extra large storage room. The creamery will be in another building altogether.

Thus the prediction of the PRESS that work rebuilding this plant would be commenced as soon as the brick were cool enough to be handled has proven true.

Mr. Cooper will also be back very shortly with a force of men to resume work on the bank building and opera house and this together with the ice plant rebuilding and the several dwelling houses that are contracted for to be built this fall, El Centro will present a very busy appearance, making it the centre of activity for the Valley as it always has been since its inception.

Will Raise Grapes

Stone brothers, of San Bernardino, purchased 360 acres of partly improved land near Mesquite Lake from J. M. Cardiff. With 40 acres more upon which filling will be made, there will be 400 acres, all of which will be set out to grapes. Most of the acreage will be in Malagas, with a small percentage of Sultanas. The rumored price of the land was \$12,000. Stone brothers on their trip about the Valley visited the ranch of D. G. Alpin, east of Imperial. Mr. Alpin has ten acres of Malaga grapes approaching their third year. Stone brothers offered Mr. Alpin \$175 an acre cash for this vineyard. The offer was refused.—Brawley News.

Mr. and Mrs. Ira Baker are the proud parents of a 10 pound boy, born at Santa Monica, Aug. 28th. They are expected to return shortly to their ranch, near El Centro.

WHERE MORE THAN
\$200,000
IS BEING SPENT

The town of El Centro was started in the fall of 1905 and is now about 8 months old. It is located in the center of the best part of the Imperial Valley, and is destined to become the metropolis.

The following improvements now completed, or under way, make a record to be proud of:

Ice and Cold Storage Plant (Brick)	\$75,000
Hotel El Centro (Brick)	30,000
Transformer Station and Power Lines	20,000
Opera House Block (Brick)	40,000
Cement Sidewalks	10,000
Water Works System	10,000
Electric Light Plant for El Centro	5,000
S. P. R. R. Depot	6,000
Holt Block (5 brick stores)	15,000
Machine Shop and Equipment	2,500
Hotel Franklin	5,000
Hardware Store	2,000
El Centro Cantaloupe Association Packing House	2,000
Peterson Building (Brick)	1,200
Fuller's Residence	1,500
Three Cottages	3,000
El Centro Land Co's Office	800
Blinn Lumber Co. Yards	2,500
Fuller & Aten's Office	600
Grading Streets, Etc.	1,000
Total	\$234,100

For information regarding El Centro and the Imperial Valley, and its opportunities, address

D. H. CHAPLIN
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EL CENTRO, CALIFORNIA