

The Winter Tomato Belt.

A correspondent, of the Country Gentlemen, writing from Dade county, Florida, describes tomato growing in that section of the state.

A portion of Florida, which lies along the sea coast, is known as the "winter tomato belt." This is the only spot in the United States where tomatoes can be grown, without artificial protection, practically all winter.

The climate of this region is tempered by the Gulf Stream, which flows within a few miles of the tomato farms. We have no freezing weather, although about two winters out of three we get one light frost in January. On the other hand, it is never excessively hot, even in mid-summer. The highest temperature ever known in Dade county is 95 in the shade, while New York and other northern states see the mercury above a hundred at some time practically every summer.

As a rule, the experienced tomato grower, who has learned to eliminate as much as possible the chances of failure, plants only two crops a year, one in September on the high sandy soil, and another in late January or early February on land known as "glade" or prairie. This is heavy soil, and it overflows in the wet months of September and October of each year. The fall crop matures in December, and the spring crop in March, April and May. These are months when no other growers in the United States have any tomatoes to sell, and the result is that high prices are realized.

The tomato is a tropical plant, and it thrives in this locality. It is easily grown, and the money made from the crop is almost beyond belief by the northern farmer, who, as a rule, is content with \$10 to \$20 an acre net profit. There are several men in Dade County who are worth anywhere from \$15,000 to \$40,000 who came to the county penniless less than ten years ago. In fact, this section was a wilderness then. The wealth of these men has come almost exclusively from tomato growing, and it is not difficult to see how this is possible. We often read of an argument between the tomato canners and growers of New Jersey as to whether the price per ton delivered at the cannery shall be \$7.50 or \$8.50 for the next season, and when a Jersey farmer gets so much as \$9 a ton, he thinks he is making big money. The Dade County growers who could figure his crop as worth only \$20 a ton on the vines would think twice before picking them at all. We get on an average about \$50 a ton, seldom less, and \$100 a ton is frequently realized.

Our tomatoes are not sold to canners. They are shipped to the cities of the North, where in winter and early spring the demand is always greater than the supply. The standard package is the six-basket carrier, which holds about five-eighths of a bushel. We sell largely at home to the professional buyers, but the price we get is based on the price obtainable in the North. A fair price, say in New York City, for one of these carriers is \$2.50; out of this amount we have to figure about as follows: Freight, 45c.; commission, 25c.; drayage, 5c.; cost of carrier and paper wraps, 20c.; total, 95c. This leaves us \$1.55 for five-eighths of a bushel of tomatoes. I have frequently realized more than this; also at times less. However, it is about the average. It takes a very few acres of tomatoes under these conditions to run into a whole lot of money.

Dade County is almost without livestock of any sort, with the exception of horses. The result is we have to resort to chemical fertilizers, and these are very expensive. As a rule, our tomato growers apply this substitute for manure at the rate of about \$25 per acre. It has, however, been demonstrated that it pays to apply more than this. On my last season's spring crop I applied a ton to the acre of a

very high grade fertilizer, costing me \$40. At the end of the season, as my crop showed a net profit above all cost of fertilizer, labor and every expense of over \$175 an acre, I felt that the heavy outlay for fertilizer was justified.

Not every one succeeds at tomato growing; some experience is necessary. Lots of newcomers jump in to make a fortune the first year; they hear of the money made last season by Mr. So and So, and proceed to duplicate his success at once. This the newcomer generally doesn't do; in fact, he mostly makes a failure. Because one can grow a crop of tomatoes in the North is no reason why he can do it in our section; conditions are different. The conservative man, however, who comes to the county and works for some experienced grower the first year (and work is to be had for the asking at good wages) picks up information here and there, learns how the crop is cared for and, above all, forgets all he knew about tomato growing in some other section. Such a man, as a general thing, makes a success the following season. However, it takes some money; a man cannot live, buy land, a horse, tools, chemical fertilizers, etc., without capital.

We are not dependent on the commission man to sell our truck, as a rule; he is the last resort. The people of the northern cities make such a demand for fresh garden truck during the winter and early spring that produce dealers send buyers to our section who actually compete in offers for our truck. There are at times fifty of these buyers in Dade County. Besides the buyers, we have as customers the packing houses. They pay cash when the tomatoes are taken from your wagon, and up to May 15 they buy every tomato they can get.

Other sorts of winter garden truck are grown in large quantities—string beans, eggplant and peppers in about the order named as to volume, but the tomato comes first.

Split Oranges. Pruning Orange Trees.

The knowledge of the cause which produces split oranges has been sought with great interest by many orange growers. The opinion of The California Cultivator is worthy of consideration. But here, where we grow very few Navels, comparatively and yet lose thousands of oranges by splitting, we can feel sure that whatever the cause it is not produced by the navel.

"Editor Cultivator:—Will you please tell me the cause of oranges splitting and what is to be done to prevent it? Is pruning the way to correct an orange tree that resembles a deciduous tree, being open and its branches strangled—F. W. W., Highland.

We would be delighted to give you an answer that would satisfy the question of "Why do oranges split?" The department at Washington has a man working on this problem. It has been discussed through the columns of this paper a number of times, and only theories have been advanced. No results from experience have given any satisfaction. It is believed to be some weakness of the navel, as the splitting, with rare exceptions, takes place at that point. There are always some splits each season, some seasons show more than others. We have noticed that some varieties, Jaffa for instance, produce fully 90 per cent of splits in some localities every year. This orange invariably has double navels, but they are more perfect than the navels in the Washington Navel. There is a theory that the navel provides an entrance for germs that might break down or weaken the tissues of the rind at that point. This would stop the natural development of the rind at that point and it must give way there in order to make room for the expanding pulp. This theory is apparently supposed by the fact that seedling oranges, which have no

navel, seldom crack; such cases do not have the splits always at the blossom end. Occasionally a Navel orange splits on the side. This all goes to show that the navel is not responsible for all of the splitting. We have no data showing that orchards fertilized in any particular way are more free from splits than others or vice versa.

Pruning of the orange should be confined to the cutting back of straggling branches and cutting out useless wood that forms in the interior of the tree. Open spaces will soon become filled by sprouts that grow out of them. An orange tree that has an uneven growth may be made symmetrical by the heading in of the out-reaching branches."

Profitable Fruit Growing.

There are occasional instances of such phenomenal success as is reported by the Tampa Tribune. But we think that there must be some mistake about this, for a stranger to begin with nothing, and achieve such wonderful success, in two years, seems really remarkable.

F. P. Barry, a successful truck farmer of Sydney, called on the Tribune today. While here he narrated his experience in truck farming in this county.

Two years ago he located in this county, with barely enough money to buy a horse and wagon and began truck farming in the vicinity of Sidney, making strawberries his specialty.

During this time he has bought a forty acre farm and built a house thereon.

It is now all paid for and he has, in addition, started a very creditable bank account.

He bought his fertilizer and seed the first year on time and last year marketed 6,000 quarts of strawberries. This year he has reached 7,000 quarts, which are selling in the eastern markets at 35 cents per quart, or netting Mr. Barry 18 cents per quart.

He has, in the meantime, raised his corn, potatoes, cabbages, beans, etc.

As a matter of course he is well pleased with this country as a money making section.

E. O. Painter Fertilizer Co.,
Jacksonville, Fla.:

Gentlemen: The Special Cane fertilizer you sent me last June gave me good results. I am just through grinding cane and making syrup and I can certainly vouch for the best grade of syrup I ever made and know your fertilizer helped considerably to this end. Yours respectfully,

C. K. McQUARIE,
DeFuniak Springs, Fla., Dec. 21, 1905

E. O. Painter Fertilizer Co.,
Jacksonville, Fla.,

Will you kindly send me prices of your fertilizers for this year. I have used yours and no others, for the last three years and wish for no better. I wish to get 4 tons for the first application and more in June.

Yours truly, A. W. Hardee,
Rockledge, Fla., Jan. 16, 1905.

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RATES—Twenty words, name and address, one week, 25c.; three weeks, 50c.

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FOR SALE—One 15 h. p. boiler and one 15 h. p. Erie engine. Second hand; recently in use. Condition supposed to be fair, but not guaranteed. Will be sold for almost nothing to make room for other machinery. Speak quick. THE E. O. PAINTER PRINTING CO., DeLand, Fla. tf

WANTED SALESMEN—Salesmen wanted. Three salesmen for our new County, Township and Railroad Survey of Florida. This survey is a splendid compilation of facts, figures and drawings and of wonderful value. Counties and towns fully indexed and population of each are given; railroads plainly shown and distances between all stations are shown; congressional districts outlined, numbered and population given. Other features too numerous to mention. A splendid opportunity for energetic men. RAND, McNALLY & CO., Chicago, Ill.

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