

Horticultural Department

EDITED BY F. WALDEN.

(All inquiries for information from this Department should be addressed to No. 3 Howe Street, Seattle.)

Thinning Fruit Imperative.

The thinning of fruit is one of the things that every fruit grower must be prepared for. In the eastern part of the United States, in some localities, the growers are discussing the advisability of thinning fruit, but in the Pacific Coast sections that day is past. New beginners who have not been long in this part of our great county are much puzzled over this matter. I have been asked by some such persons if we knock the fruit off with a stick and when we tell them that the surplus fruit must be picked off by hand they seem appalled. I know how to sympathize with such

Too Late

Is the answer many a man has had to take during this last month, because he waited until the last moment to place his order, only to find stocks depleted, and assortments broken.

It is time now to lay your plans for next season. If you are going to be on the market for nursery stock, drop us a line. We have splendid, clean, thrifty, guaranteed stock, on which we want to quote you. Quality comes first, with us, and we have what you want.

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people for I have passed through this puzzling period in fruit growing. But I can assure such persons that the work is not so appalling as it seems to be. Once we get settled down to the work in real dead earnest it moves along much faster than we had expected.

Some kinds of fruit do not need thinning. In this class are included all kinds of berries, cherries and grapes. It is true that some times grapes are thinned where extra fine samples are desired for exhibition purposes, but not much of this is done. Apples, pears, peaches, plums, prunes, apricots, nectarines and quinces are the fruits that need thinning. Now it often happens with any of the fruits here named that thinning is not needed. This may be owing to the fact that the set of fruit buds the previous autumn was light, or it may be because the severe weather during the winter or at blooming time has killed part of the fruit buds. There is another very prevalent cause for eliminating the need of thinning, and that may be called self-thinning or the "drop." I have more than once seen a peach orchard that seemed to need thinning up to a certain time, usually in the latter part of May, and then the "drop" was so heavy that thinning could be dispensed with. That occurred last year with us on over 2000 Elberta peach trees.

As we are not able to determine in advance whether this drop is going to occur, it is not safe to do your thinning till you know the time for this self-thinning is past. For if we should thin to a proper condition and then one half should drop off we will only have a half crop. Some claim that if peaches are thinned properly there will not be any drop, but that is a mistake and any one who will study this matter in the orchard as we have will see his mistake. It is not the fact that peaches are too thick that causes them to drop, but a weakness in the stem caused by the weather in the winter or the spring. Last year our Elbertas thinned themselves sufficiently and sometimes too much, while our Fosters and Champions along beside them had to be heavily thinned. In fact the same variety of peach in one locality on our ranch will thin itself while in another locality they will not drop at all.

Apples sometimes have what is known among fruit men as the "June Drop" and no thinning will be needed. We have but little of the "June Drop" in the warm irrigated valleys of the Northwest. But frost often thins our apples enough and sometimes too much. Never do any thinning unless it is needed and this may require waiting till we have passed the time for self thinning. Before we begin thinning we must have settled in our minds some definite rules to go by. If we are going to thin peaches we must settle on some distance apart for the peaches that are left. Remember that in all cases of thinning

the point to be considered is not how many we pull off, but how many to leave on. Don't look at the fruit on the ground, but what is left on the trees. Four to five inches apart on the limbs is a good rule to go by in thinning peaches.

In thinning apples we can use a different rule. Leave one apple in a place is a good rule in many cases. The grower knows that most apples grow in bunches, but some do not. Where they are in bunches thin to one in a place and generally that will be enough. Some apples like the Missouri Pippin grow all along the limbs and can hardly be said to be in bunches. In such cases a distance apart on the limb will have to be settled on. Four to six inches apart will answer pretty well. It takes experience to learn to thin properly. You may use green hands provided an experienced hand is along with them as an overseer.

There is one erroneous idea very prevalent about thinning fruits of all kinds and especially apples. Many people think we thin to prevent damage to the trees. That is a mistake. We thin to get larger fruit and indirectly we may benefit the trees. But this benefit to the trees in keeping them from breaking down is not nearly as much as many people suppose. In many cases no benefit is derived from thinning so far as the keeping the trees from breaking. Some people seem much surprised when they hear or read this statement. But if a tree is thinned moderately it may produce just as many pounds as it would if not thinned at all.

It is the weight that breaks the tree and not the number of fruit it produces. If we judiciously thin, the tree may produce just as many boxes and consequently just as many pounds of fruit would be produced if not thinned at all.

It is to increase size and to a limited extent quality that we aim at in thinning. In the case of peaches we must secure size or we cannot sell our product at all. Little peaches will not sell at all. Large apples up to four tier are the best sellers, but when they are very large the price declines.

In a general way we may say, thin peaches in May and apples in June, but in some cases this must be modified. Sometimes peaches will have to be held till June to determine if they will self-thin. Apples may be thinned during all of July, but it is better to get them thinned just as soon after the June drop as possible. It will do some good to thin apples up almost to picking time.

IRRIGATION AND ALKALI

How often the question is asked, "Does not irrigation tend to produce alkali?" When I have had that question asked me and have replied, "not at all," it would be amusing to see the surprise depicted in the face of the questioner. Some have told me flatly that they know better and would

Nursery Talk

The season just closed has been a mighty satisfactory one with us.

True, we did not harvest as many trees from our large plant of 1910 as we would have liked, but the nurserymen of the Northwest were all in the same condition, so we knew it was due to no fault of ours. Our stock came out clean and up to our usual high standard of excellence, and our customers are pleased as usual, which is mighty gratifying to us, for the greatest pleasure to us in our business life is a satisfied customer.

The plant for 1911-12 selling season is all in the ground and at this writing (May 1st) is in exceedingly fine condition. Our large force of loyal salesman is in the field, the orders are already coming in and the year promises to be a record breaker.

We think we learn a little better each year how to meet your needs. Drop us a line stating your wants.

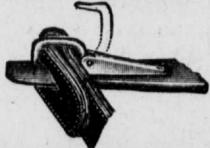
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