

Elgin Orchard Subject of Magazine Article

In the June 30 issue of the Oregon Farmer, one of the most influential farm papers in the northwest, Ralph Erskine, field editor of that paper contributes an article entitled "Finds Money in Orchard." The orchard which inspired Mr. Erskine's article is the H. H. Weatherspoon orchard near Elgin. Mr. Erskine's article follows:

We seldom think of a commercial orchard in a dry farming district, and, in fact, there are few in such locations that can actually be called "commercial." There is, however, a large commercial orchard in Union county, Ore., which, it is claimed, will produce apples of quality. This orchard is owned by H. H. Weatherspoon of Elgin.

The owner has been shipping fruit by the carload for more than five years. Four main varieties have become established by this grower as the best paying apples to grow under local conditions. These are the Delicious, Rome Beauty, Winter Banana and Newtown Pippin. There is a better demand for these varieties and they bring in greater returns than some of the other staple apples that are grown in the west.

There is something about the soil and the weather in this altitude that seems to produce a better Delicious and Winter Banana than some of the well known fruit districts," said Mr. Weatherspoon. "We have a better chance to regulate our water supply since it is all done by cultivation. The soil is ideal for an orchard and there is less danger from frosts since our trees are all on side hill land. An apple tree needs a rich silt loam with a soft clay subsoil to supply the mineral matter for the fruit."

Clean cultivation is carried out religiously, both for the purpose of keeping down the weeds and to conserve what moisture is in the soil. By using a tractor the owner finds that he can cultivate closer to the trees and do as much work with one man as could be done with two men and six horses. Plowing is never attempted between the tree rows because the soil is light enough so that it can be easily worked with a disc which is followed by a "sleeker" or weeder which kills the small weeds and creates a dust mulch. This process is stopped by the first of August, so that the fruit will ripen naturally.

"Thorough cultivation is the secret of keeping the fertility of the soil," according to Mr. Weatherspoon, "and we will not neglect to manure the land or grow green manure crops for several years, because there is enough plant food to last for many years. While the trees were young we grew such crops as strawberries, potatoes and other cultivated crops that could be marketed so as to bring something in, until the orchard came into bearing.

Now we don't raise anything of the kind except for our own use because we don't have time and then the trees need all of the plant food they can get since they are producing heavily.

"I started in on a small tract, putting out what new land we could get cleared each year. I raised practically all of our nursery stock as it was needed. I planted several acres of trees such as the Spokane Beauty, which proved to be too large and poorly flavored for this altitude. I have them practically all grafted to Delicious scions and will have better trees in a few years. I believe that I am the only man in the country that has tried out asphaltum for grafting wax. I get the D grade asphaltum and heat it so that it will stick easily and graft in the usual manner. So far I have been able to get 90 per cent of the scions, thus treated, to grow."

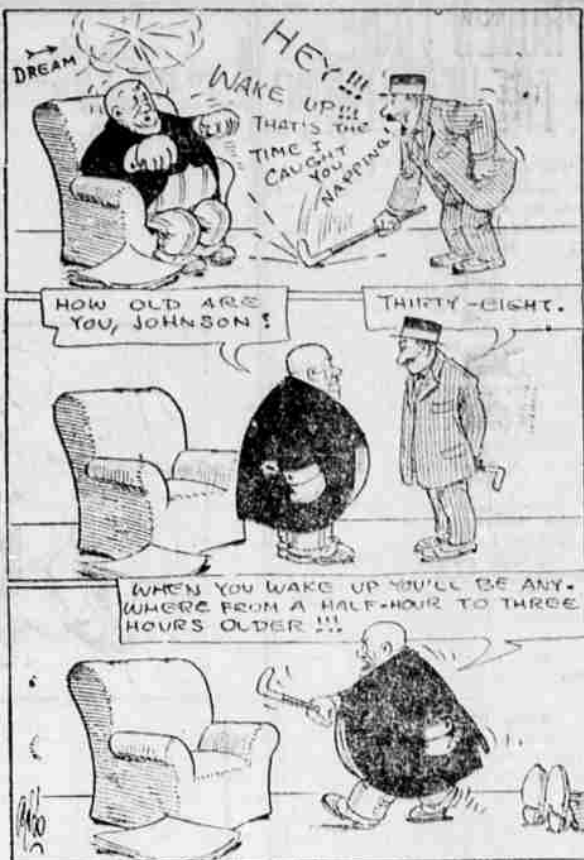
The spraying is done by the dry method and the owner claims to be the second man in the state to try out the plan. Dry lead-arsenate is mixed half and half with wheat flour and the mixture is blown onto the trees in a thick fog. If there is a seven-mile wind blowing the trees will need the dust on only one side, but when the air is still it must be blown onto both sides. The owner has used the plan for the last three years and has had only 10 boxes of wormy apples out of 2900. This has not been tried for dormant pests because there has been little need of such in this section.

"I have had no trouble in marketing my crop each year," continued Mr. Weatherspoon. "I have my markets established and I ship to the same localities each season. I have never had to consign a carload of fruit and I think we should get away from the system if we expect to get anything for our products. I sell all my fruit through bona fide sales and I have not lost a car of apples in the last three years. It is not difficult to establish a market if you have the quality to give your customers."

"The trouble is with consigned shipments, the consumers get an uneven supply. The commission men have a number of cars shipped to them and they are not going to lose on the deal if they can help it. They will then lower the price in order to get rid of the product and the grower has to stand the loss."

"I have always been an easy seller. I would rather sell all my crops at a somewhat lower price than to sell only part of it at a high price. That is why I have tried to put up my fruit in two or more packs. I find that there is a demand for the jumble pack if the apples are good enough to stand

OUTBURSTS OF EVERETT TRUE



inspection. There are families in the middle west where apples are not plentiful and they like to buy apples by the box when they can get them small enough to eat out of the hand without getting an extra fancy apple. They like them to put in the children's lunch and there will not be the waste that there would be to a larger apple. For a cooking apple the demand is for a medium sized apple as well as one that sells for a moderate price.

"This is why I have been putting out a grade that will go without wrapping and need but little packing. It cleans up a great quantity that would otherwise be sold on the local market or wasted."

The owner then told how many orchards in the irrigated districts appeared to be hampered by the growing of alfalfa between the rows. It is one thing to put nitrogen into the soil and it is another thing to grow alfalfa

continually and create too much fertility. There is almost as much harm from too much nitrogen as from not to have enough, according to Mr. Weatherspoon.

"When an orchardist grows hay between the rows of trees he will get an uneven distribution of water, because when it is time to cut the hay the ground must be dry and before the hay can be taken off the trees are in need of water and then the water is turned on in abundance. Such a practice will soon weaken the trees and they will go into the winter in a semi-dormant condition. Such trees will generally bud early in the spring and get caught by the frosts quicker than when they are kept healthy all the year round. This is what causes some trees to have a yellow appearance and the leaves to be somewhat smaller.

"If I were to raise an orchard under irrigation I would practice clean

cultivation and only raise a green manure crop as the land needed it. I would try a crop of rye occasionally instead of alfalfa as it is easier to get started, does not come up the second year, and makes almost as good fertilizer when turned under."

Mr. Weatherspoon told how he had worked as a telegraph operator for several years before taking up the orchard. He had only saved up a few hundred dollars and the place had to be built up from the beginning. "I know of no better way to create values," he remarked, "than to improve land and build up a home. We started in with this place 10 years ago and it cost us \$7500 for the 280 acres.

Now there are fully 140 acres in bearing orchard and we would not take \$6000 an acre for it today.

"There is much satisfaction in seeing work done right and to know that you are getting somewhere," the owner concluded. "It suits me much better, even though it is a hard grind at times, than all the public life that a man could ask for. I have something to show for the past 10 years' time and the money that I have been put-

ting into the place is just like putting it into a bank. I can draw on it any time."

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