

# IN THE HOOD RIVER VALLEY APPLE GROWING HAS BECOME A SCIENCE

Fruit From Its Orchards Has Made Oregon World-Wide Fame



LOOKING ACROSS HOOD RIVER VALLEY. LARAWAY PHOTO.

By E. H. Shepard, Editor Better Fruit.

AS THIS New Year's edition of The Oregonian is to be devoted largely to the apple industry of the State, it seems that it would not be complete without a short history of apple growing in this district, and therefore I am going to tell you about it, not in a journalistic manner, but from the point of view of an orchardist. In this connection I trust this story will be of some benefit in the way of inducing Easterners to come West and assist in building up the great State of Oregon, which, if it has an equal, at least has no superior in growing fine fruit.

It is a well-known fact that for the last five years Hood River, on the principal varieties of commercial apples, has obtained prices that have not been equaled by any fruitgrowing district in America. And therefore an account of this industry and its methods may be of some value in the way of developing the industry in our State.

In Hood River the apple grower, is a specialist, and being favored with superior climate and soil, he succeeds in producing apples that for excellence in quality, richness of color, keeping qualities and magnificence are the admiration not only of every State in the Union, but of Europe as well. Go where you will and you will find the fame of the Hood River apple has arrived before you. Every first-class hotel in all of our big cities, every Pullman dining car, every Trans-Atlantic liner has Hood River apples on its menu.

With the fruits of Hood River many prizes were taken at the Chicago and Charleston expositions. The Wilder medal at Buffalo has awarded the State of Oregon, and at the St. Louis Exposition the only grand prize given any single county in the United States on green fruit was given Wasco County on a carload of apples sent from Hood River. In every horticultural exhibit where Hood River has exhibited she has been crowned with glory.

The Hood River apple grower, after clearing his land, usually gives it thorough cultivation and grows the first year a crop of something else, for the reason it is not advisable to plant newly cleared land in apple trees. Our growers buy the best of one-year-old stock and are willing to pay an extra price and are anxious to get the best trees that can be obtained.

While some prefer setting the trees in the Fall, the majority usually set in the Spring. Either time is all right, providing the soil is in the proper condition. The holes are dug wide and deep, and when the tree is set it is well "firmed" in the ground. The soil should be sufficiently dry to pulverize nicely. Two methods of laying out an orchard are in vogue, the hexagonal and the square. The hexagonal enables the orchardist to plant more trees to the acre. Either system is good. Apple trees are usually planted 26, 28 and 30 feet apart. In no case should they be less than 26 feet, and on the other hand in Hood River Valley it is not necessary to set them over 30 feet apart.

As the beginning of an orchard is of vital importance, it is wise even in a short article like this to say a few more words about preparing the ground and about digging the hole. The ground should be plowed deep and thoroughly pulverized by harrowing and dragging until it is in the best possible tilth. The holes should not be less than 20 to 24 inches deep and should be at least two and one-half to three feet across. In digging the hole it is best to throw the top layer of dirt to one side and the bottom layer on the opposite side.

When the hole is refilled it is advis-

able, as far as practical, to fill the hole up with the soil from the top layer. And it is important in filling to see that no dead roots, left from the clearing, get into the hole, for the reason that the dead roots of other trees in some way which I cannot explain poison the root of the apple tree and are apt to kill it.

The roots of the young tree should be cut off diagonally so that the flat cut will rest squarely in the hole, and the cut should be so made and the tree so set that the cut part will be on a level with the bottom of the hole. It is well to have the roots of the tree well moistened before planting. This can be done by placing the young trees in a barrel of water. The tree should be cut off about 20 inches from the ground if you want low-headed trees, and that is what the orchardists want nowadays.

The trees should be properly pruned so as to develop a low-headed tree, and a tree at the same time whose branches will be spreading, so that the sunshine can get into the center of it. It is necessary to color your fruit and develop it to the highest state of perfection.

There are two methods of pruning. One being that of pruning the tree to a central leader, and the other the vase system. Both have strong adherents. Either is good when properly done. The pruning and shaping of a tree is perhaps one of the most important features in the growing of an orchard, and at the same time it is the most difficult to explain. I doubt very much if anybody could write an article that would teach a man how to prune properly. It is a business that he must learn by practical experience and observation. So I will pass that subject by and take up a few of the other important subjects of orchard management that are of general interest.

In order to get the best results, both as to yield and size of fruit, it is necessary to keep the orchard under perfect cultivation, so that the soil will be properly pulverized. A thorough state

Apples, boxes, 1,082,200	\$1,423,900
Dried prunes, lbs., 25,420,950	1,208,875
Prunes and plums	
Fresh to canners	
and others, tons, 4,185	90,000
Pears, boxes, 247,750	286,000
Peaches, boxes, 445,620	248,200
Cherries, boxes, 2,420,000	220,200
Apricots, boxes, 6,500	7,500
Strawberries, bx., 6,980,000	46,200
Blackberries, bx., 2,150,000	23,500
Raspberries, bx., 1,450,000	14,500
Loganberries, bx., 1,140,000	35,000
Currants, boxes, 370,000	31,000
Gooseberries, bx., 225,000	12,500
Grapes, boxes, 3,945,000	121,500
Other fruit	28,000
Total value	\$4,278,150

of cultivation is necessary in order to enable the rootlets to get their food from the soil and it is also necessary in order to conserve the moisture, which is absolutely necessary for the growth of the tree. Moisture can be supplied by irrigation, but while Hood River Valley is blessed with three irrigation systems and therefore has an ample supply of water, very little water is brought into our orchards. Most of the growers will not water an orchard until the trees come into bearing. We claim the roots go deeper if not irrigated, and therefore get a bigger area of soil.

After an orchard comes into bearing, even then many fruitgrowers do not irrigate, and few irrigate more than once a year. We believe that the less water an apple has the better the flavor will be, and we feel equally convinced that the apple that is not irrigated, or only irrigated once during the season, will keep longer than the one irrigated more frequently. I will not go into the details of



4 YEAR OLD SPITZENBERG IN HOOD RIVER ORCHARD. PHOTO BY LARAWAY.

spraying further than to say that growers in Hood River Valley put on a Fall spray, using Bordeaux mixture, where there is no indication of anthracnose, and also lime and sulphur, both to eradicate and prevent the development of San Jose scale or fungus. In the Spring the lime and sulphur solution is again used for the same purpose. When the apple trees are in blossom, just before all the petals have fallen, growers put on their first spray for the codling moth. They use arsenate of lead and put on three to five sprayings with this material during the season.

When the apples are the size of hazel nuts, or just before the first thinning is given, every cluster of apples is thinned so that but one remains. The second thinning usually is done a little bit later after the first drop occurs, which is when the apples are the size of hazel nuts. At this time they are so thinned that no branch will have more than it can support without breaking. The usual distance is from four to eight inches apart, according to the load on the limb and the variety of apples.

By thinning to this distance Hood River produces the finest quality of fruit in size and appearance, and when it is done with good judgment a uniform size is obtained throughout the entire orchard, and the trees are grown that command the highest prices.

When the apples are picked they are handled very carefully to prevent bruising. When they are packed the same care is used in handling them. Any sting, blemish, bruise or deformity that affects the general appearance of the apple is considered sufficient cause for throwing it into the cull box. The apples are packed by experienced packers. The box is lined with white paper. Paper is placed between each layer, and duplex paper is wrapped around each apple. The box is then attractively labeled.

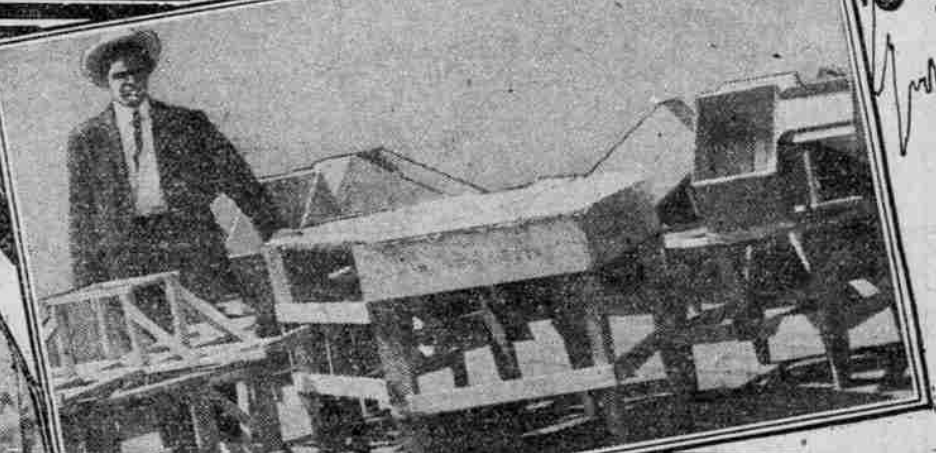
This, in connection with our soil and climate, has enabled the Hood River and the Mosier districts to get prices for their apples for the last five years which stand as a record all over the world.

The soil of Hood River Valley is of a volcanic origin and full of all the minerals which are necessary for the development of the apple to its highest state of perfection. We are favored with a climate that for the apple is ideal, with sunshine during the entire growing season and warm days and cool nights. Furthermore, Hood River Valley, while lying along the great Columbia, is blessed with a breeze from the ocean that so tempers its climate that it is practically immune from frosts. The fruit crop in Hood River Valley has never failed.

In addition to the foregoing general description of our methods, it seems fitting that a few words should be said about the profit there is in the business, and I will therefore give a few results, which are mostly from the 1907 crop, for the reason that returns are not all complete for 1907, as the entire crop has not been marketed on account of the car shortage.

Frank Egert, of Portland, from 3000 trees sold \$8500 worth. L. Strunk, from 24 acres, sold over \$2000 worth. James Lacey, in 1907, from one acre of Newtowns, sold \$1900 worth. J. O. Mark, from 150 Spitzenberg trees five years old, occupying two acres, sold \$546.75 worth of fancy apples. On a conservative basis a bearing apple orchard in Hood River Valley will net the grower from \$200 to \$500 an acre, which is 30 per cent on a valuation of from \$1500 to \$2500.

The illustrations given are simply average cases, and the estimate is extremely conservative, so that what has been done, is being done and can be done again. There are, in fact, many cases where a crop of apples has brought from \$1500 to \$2500 an acre.



APPLE PACKING APPARATUS HOOD RIVER



SPRAYING APPLE ORCHARD HOOD RIVER VALLEY



PICKING SPITZENBERG APPLES AT HOOD RIVER - PHOTO BY H. C. DIETZ