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Fruit Raising in Coos County...

Vast Amount of Land Suitable for Fruit. Conditions Different Than in Other Localities.

That the fruit industry in Coos county has been sadly neglected, to the great loss of our farmers, must be apparent to any one who has given this question any thought at all. This subject is so broad, and there are so many phases of the question, and all to the advantage of Coos county as the natural home of so many varieties of fruit, that to treat of the subject comprehensively in one article with the limited space our columns afford, presents a difficulty which is indeed hard to overcome.

In the first place there are the wild fruits which might be described with profit to the newcomer. Then there are the numerous varieties of cultivated fruits which may be grown here, each in its turn requiring much space in which to set forth the best soil, the varieties which thrive the best in this climate, and the manner of caring for them here in order to bring the best results. So in an article of this kind, we can give, only in a general way, a brief outline of the whole subject.

There is one thing which it is necessary for the easterner to learn when he comes to this coast, and that is that the climate and conditions here are so entirely different from anything he has ever seen before, that the methods he has learned and used in the East cannot be used here. He will have to learn all of his lessons in farming over again. Of course his experience elsewhere will not be altogether useless here, but he will find as all others have done, that different conditions of soil and climate require different methods. But we shall not discuss these methods at this time.

The wild fruits which thrive here are very numerous in variety as well as abundant in quantity and excellent in quality. Of course, as the country is settled and the land cleared these wild fruits are dug up and supplanted by tame varieties. But there are thousands of acres left here yet. The most abundant of all these, perhaps, are the wild blackberry and the huckleberry. In their season these berries may be found in our market by the bushels, and the surrounding hills are covered with them. During the blackberry season people are seen daily going in large numbers—almost a constant stream in the early morning—to the hills to pick this luscious fruit; and later in the day may be seen returning, all heavily laden with the result of their day's work. As we wish to speak more especially of the tame fruits we shall not dwell longer on this.

The first question of course is to select the land for planting to tame fruits. The bottom lands are very rich and most admirably suited to fruit raising. The early settlers, having such abundance of land from which to choose, naturally used the bottom lands for all purposes, and many of them became so accustomed to using this land exclusively that it is yet difficult to convince many of them that any other kind of land is of any use whatever for any purpose. But of late years it has been demonstrated beyond a doubt that our bench land is admirably adapted to this purpose. Again, the early settlers seldom if ever cultivated their orchards after the first two or three years. Here, also, later experience has proven them wrong. So that it is now claimed by many who have tried it that the upland, when properly prepared and cultivated, will raise as good a quality and almost, if not quite, as large a quantity as the bottom lands. In fact many claim that the fruit grown on the upland has a better flavor than that grown on the bottom.

Then here is the advantage. The bottom land is very valuable for hay and dairy purposes, while the hill land is not. And if the hill land will raise as good fruit as the bottom land

economy would compel the use of the hill land for fruit.

Coos county has one advantage which we believe no other place on earth possesses. Insect and other fruit pests are practically unknown here. This is a great saving of labor and expense. While fruit-raisers of other sections are spraying and using all sorts of devices and experiments to rid their fruit of these pests the Coos county farmer goes about other work serene in the knowledge that his apples and his peaches and pears will be free from worms and scales and blight and all other defects which so annoy his neighbors. This is an advantage not to be overlooked by any one contemplating a venture in this business.

The varieties of fruit that may be successfully grown here are so numerous that we shall not attempt to give more than a very few of them. Apples are, perhaps the most common and the most easily and successfully grown here. From the quality and quantity grown here it would seem that this climate and soil are the natural home of the apple. Some varieties seem to do better than others, however. Plant a Baldwin or a Greening or a Gravenstine any place in this country and it will thrive and bring forth an abundant crop in a very few years. This is not saying that the product would not be better or the yield greater by proper cultivation.

Here, as elsewhere, there are the three principal classes as to season—the early or summer apple, the fall apple, and the winter apple. For the early variety the Early Harvest seems to be the general favorite. The Gravenstine is the leader of all others as a fall apple, while the Baldwin seems to be the staple as a winter apple.

Prunes, pears and plums seem to grow here almost as naturally as apples. Some varieties of cherries do well while others do not. Grapes and peaches do not seem adapted to this climate, although many of our farmers especially back among the hills and away from the ocean, raise quite a considerable quantity of both. Small fruits and berries are very easily grown, and might be made profitable if properly handled.

We make no claim for tropical fruits, such as oranges lemons and bananas. Our climate is too damp, there are too many cool winds and fogs from the ocean for such as these.

Our farmers have been entirely too negligent in the matter of establishing a market for their fruit. No united or persistent effort has ever been made along this line, and the result is that while their neighbors are receiving top-notch prices for all the fruit they can raise our farmers sell at third-class rate or allow their fruit to rot on the trees. It is only within the last few years (less than ten), that Jackson county fruit has gained the very enviable reputation and demand which it now has. This has been brought about by united, organized and persistent effort on the part of the fruit-raisers themselves. When the writer first came to Oregon he spent some months in Jackson county. The apples were then fed to the hogs, made into cider, disposed of any way at all—too often allowed to rot on the tree. Recently the Jackson County Fruit-growers' Association has been formed and the same apples are sold at from one to two dollars per box. The other fruits are sold in the same proportion as to price, and the demand always exceeds the supply.

Our fruit is just as good, in fact better than the Jackson county fruit, because we have no pests, as we mentioned above, and with the proper effort would be in as great demand. We also have the advantage over the Jackson county people in the matter of freight rates. Our freight by water costs us less than one-fourth what theirs does by rail.

With this matter properly adjusted Coos county will certainly be a veritable paradise for the fruit raiser—Sentinel.

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