

## MANAGER OF BERRY GROWERS TELLS OF PROBLEMS CONFRONTING FARMERS

Following is a letter received from D. E. Towle, manager of the Cooperative Fruit Growers' association, in which he discusses some of the problems now confronting the farmer. Mr. Towle is to be congratulated on the splendid success of the work undertaken by that organization this year for it was largely through his untiring efforts that the fruit was taken care of and a good market secured for it. Those who worked side by side with him, whose names are too numerous to mention, should also be given share of this praise. Mr. Towle presents very clearly the present and future outlook of the farmer and especially the berry grower in the following article.

In compliance with your invitation, I hereby submit a few thoughts relative to the raspberry industry in western Oregon.

In a general way I wish to say that the production of this toothsome fruit has a bright future in certain sections of our state. There are, however, many limiting factors to the profitable production of the red raspberry, and among them is suitable soil.

This fruit must have good soil drainage to take care of the excess water of the winter season as well as a soil with good capillary qualities to furnish moisture during the growing season in response to frequent cultivations. The soil must be well fertilized and, preferably, a light sandy loam with an open, porous subsoil to afford drainage.

Another desirable condition is a location that is favored by the availability of a high sea fog that the July sun does not penetrate until 10 or 11 o'clock in the morning during this harvest month. This condition shortens the heated period of the day and prevents excessive evaporation at this critical period of production (the harvest period).

The Gresham district fortunately has all of these natural advantages to which we attribute our success in getting larger yields of choice fruit. The harvest season here covers a season of from 30 to 40 days and the fruit of the last picking is as large and luscious as the first picking.

Another limiting factor in raspberry production is harvest help. We cannot keep pace with other industries as the only harvesting device we know of is the thumb and two fingers of the human hand. Of course, our business of berry harvesting is like the rag pickers which is never depressed, because it is always "picking up" but I am sure the harvest problem will tend to curtail production and must add materially to costs and will have a tendency to confine the industry to territories near large centers of population where help is available not only for the harvesting of the fruit but also for the canning which requires many human hands to sort into the four grades that the trade demands.

We have another method of saving the berries that we look upon with much favor. This is the barreling and freezing of the raw fruit which has passed the experimental stage and is adapted to the handling of all kinds of berries. This plan is simple and cheap and is received with favor by the jam, preserve, jelly, juice, extract and pie manufacturers and will make the handling of a larger acreage possible.

In speculating on the future of the berry business we are forced to admit that the near future is none to bright owing to many causes, chiefly among which is our narrow foreign national policy of trying to live unto ourselves and let the rest of the world go hang which has depressed values in farm products especially in the middle western states, which was one of our best berry markets, to such an extent that they cannot afford to buy our berries. This condition was also made more acute by wartime freight and express rates, which is a very keen two-edged sword that cuts both ways.

I could also mention the fact that the fruit dealer has not broken away from the habit he formed during the war of doubling the price between the factory and the consumer. There are great economical problems, but the fact is evident that the farmer must have immediate relief or go out of business. The truth is the agricultural horse has been stolen in the past two years and it is a little late to lock the barn but better late than never. If foreign exchange could be stabilized and starving Europe could take our surplus food products at a profitable price to our farmers, it would surely help our berry market as well as the market for all other products both domestic and foreign.

**Prosperity of Farmers Necessary.** I may be over-concerned but have always figured that agricultural prosperity should come first and if our farmer population of 32,000,000 people were prosperous all other interests would be well taken care of and prosperity would be general.

You will pardon this digression from the subject of raspberries, but I am sure there is a very sympathetic connection between the prosperity of our middle west farmer and fruit market. I wish to say in closing that we have built up a purely co-operative association of berry growers in this district that is now four years old and has been of material benefit to its 275 members who have in bearing nearly 1000 acres of berries. We have managed to prevent the slump that has broken the price of other truck farm products to a price little above the cost of marketing, and unless conditions grow very much worse, we will be able to pay a fair price for the harvesting of the berries and have enough left to pay the taxes and buy the baby shoes.

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Looking after the orchard spraying equipment is advisable at this season. Clean the sprayer with water and oil the pump cylinders thoroughly. It is well to drain the engine to prevent damage from freezing and store the equipment in a protected place ready for spring spraying.

## POTATO IMPROVEMENT MEANS CAREFUL WORK

A quarter of a century and more ago eastern Multnomah had a reputation for the production of a fine quality of potatoes for general purposes, and seed from this locality was much in demand. While the quality is still good and the demand for general purpose stock fair, it is becoming more and more clear to those who are studying the situation that several things are necessary if the potato industry in this section is to remain a paying industry.

Some of the things to be accomplished are, first, to cut down the acreage. Second, to increase the production per acre. The second goal may be reached by attention to fertilization, proper seeding and by the best possible cultural methods. Other necessary improvements will be the specializing on few varieties and the raising the standards of those varieties.

**Hill Selecting the Foundation.** A number of potato growers in this vicinity have been practicing hill selecting for several years with good results. This is considered the very foundation of success in the business of raising seed for the market or for the general improvement of stock. F. N. Lasley of Corbett has worked along this line for 25 years and has specialized on the American Wonder for 17 years. He has earned the reputation of being an authority on the subject. Prof. G. R. Hyslop of O. A. C., has said that Mr. Lasley has done more to improve the American Wonder potato than any other man he knows.

Mr. Lasley's records show that during that time he has increased the production per acre from about 75 bushels to an average of more than 400 bushels. This year, which was considered an off year for potatoes, his potatoes planted in April went for 90 days without rain but in spite of this handicap they produced more than 414 bushels per acre. On account of the extra quality raised, the

lowest sale in the last five years preceding this year amounted to \$922 from three acres.

Although an enthusiast on the American Wonder potato, as improved by him through the past 17 years of hill selection, Mr. Lasley does not recommend growers to specialize heavily in that variety at present on account of the lack of demand for this variety. It would seem advisable to work on varieties more in demand in California for seed purposes. He emphasizes, however, that the grower should select a variety and stay with it long enough to develop it to its highest possible perfection.

It has been demonstrated, according to Mr. Lasley, that the grower who is raising seed in a commercial way cannot work with more than one variety to advantage, on account of the danger of mixing varieties. He must know for certain what he is offering for sale and must be absolutely honest in his work. There may have been cases where middlemen have bought one variety of seed and have knowingly delivered it as another variety, but the trouble is thought to be as often with the grower as with the buyer. One the other hand, rumor has it that a large order came to Portland recently for drop seed potatoes of the Burbank variety, specifying that they should be grown in Multnomah county east of the Sandy river. Although the order was for ten times the total amount of that variety raised there, it was said to have been filled.

**Basis of Potato Improvement.** The multiplier plot is stated as the basis of potato improvement. To the uninitiated this is explained as being the process by which a product of a certain standard is discovered and maintained. One must go to the field and dig the mature potatoes by hand, taking for next year's seed only those from hills producing eight or more marketable potatoes, with no small or deformed ones. This is the begin-

ning. These should be soaked in the standard corrosive sublimate solution and planted in ground as free as possible from potato diseases. The patch should be gone over thoroughly several times during the growing season and all plants which are diseased or off type should be dug, and potatoes, vines and all carried from the patch. When the potatoes in this plot are ripe they should be dug by hand and careful selections made again from the very best hills for another multiplier plot the succeeding year. The remainder of the potatoes from the plot can be used for general planting. This method should be carefully carried out each and every year. By it any careful grower can constantly increase his production per acre and at the same time raise the quality of his potatoes and thus help to solve his marketing problems.

### FARMERS MUTUAL NOW IS YEARS OLD

The Farmers Mutual Fire Relief association has just celebrated its 18th birthday with a record of 10,000 members and more than \$15,500,000 of insurance on its books. The company had its beginning in 1904, at a meeting of Oregon farmers, of which many were from the Gresham district, at which time they decided to found an association and insure their property on the co-operative plan. In November of that year a charter was obtained and the association started with a little over \$300,000 insurance.

The business has been a success and during the 18 years it has paid out over \$150,000 in fire losses. Gresham is well represented on the board, with H. W. Snashall as president and Andrew Brugger as director. The management of the association has during its life time been in the hands of those connected with it in the beginning. The standing of the association is held so high that its policies are accepted by the Federal Land Bank, the state of Oregon and the large farm loan agencies on loans made by them.

The estimated saving to members is \$40,000 a year to the farmers insured and enables many to carry insurance who otherwise could not afford it. The association is well known in this territory and no one has other than a good word for the plan. The annual meeting will be held at the Swiss hall, in Portland on January 17 next.

### Gas Prices.

Think of gas at \$6, \$7, \$8 and \$9 a thousand cubic feet! That's what the housewives in many American cities had to pay a little over 50 years ago. Here are the "cheap" rates charged in those days: Memphis, \$5.50; St. Louis, \$4.50; Mobile, \$5.90; Nashville, \$4.50; Atlanta, \$5.50; Savannah, \$6.00; Norfolk, \$6.00; Vicksburg, \$6; New Orleans, \$4.00; Charleston, \$7.00; Montgomery, \$5.00; Macon, \$3.00; Galveston, \$8.00; San Francisco, \$6, and Sacramento, \$9.00.

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