

65,000 Acres Commercial Orchards in Rogue River Valley



Typical Young Orchard, Showing Great Area Planted—Burrell Orchards.

the location of a new orchard tract or intensified farm in the Rogue River and tributary valleys of Jackson county is the report of the recent soil survey made by the bureau of soils, United States department of agriculture, and published under the title, "Soil Survey of the Medford Area, Oregon." In the total forty-three distinct types of soil are recognized in the map published by this survey. The Rogue River valley area is very "spotted," to use a popular term. Hence, what one section may do in the way of production may be absolutely no criterion of the agricultural worth of a strip of land a quarter of a mile away. Any given quarter section of land may have half a dozen different types of soil, each separate type perhaps best fitted to the production of trees and brush, whereas almost all the remaining areas of agricultural lands of the county were originally covered with brush and tree growth, the greater part of which has been cleared.



Picking Fruit



Stock Raising

Stock raising has always been an industry of considerable relative importance in Jackson county. Conditions for stock raising are especially favorable. The climate is mild. There is little snowfall during the winter months, hence the feeding period is short. Green feed may be had on the hills during a large part of the entire year. And the adjacent mountain areas afford summer pasture. There are yet a number of large stock ranches in the smaller valleys of the county, and in the outlying districts adjacent to the better range. Also, other districts with greater range areas, such as eastern Oregon, have long looked to Jackson county and southern Oregon for their supply of young cattle to stock their ranges and big ranches and to supply winter feeders. The adjacent national forests will always afford a fixed amount of summer range for Jackson county cattle, and there is a large area of the rougher timbered and mineral bearing land that will always be available for grazing purposes.

The open grazing lands of Jackson county are generally stocked to their capacity, however, and the greatest extension of stock raising will be on the smaller farms and in connection with general farming activities. Thousands of acres of new land in the Rogue river valley may yet be irrigated, and the natural use for many of these new small farms will be for diversified and intensified farming, devoting a part of the land to stock raising, even though fruit, berries or garden truck may be the chief output. Large yields of hay may be easily grown, and this can be most profitably fed at home, even though the local prices of hay may be high.

Frost Protection

A phase of the work of the county pathologist is frost protection during the early spring days of certain years. This frost protection is in the nature of fruit crop insurance. On the slopes and the ridges and the hillsides around the lower levels of the valley, where the air circulation is good, killing frosts are practically unknown. In some parts of the valley floor orchard "heating," or "smudging," has been found an efficient and comparatively cheap form of fruit protection against the possibilities of a late killing frost during the blooming period. A system of frost warnings has been worked out and orchards in general are equipped with uniform apparatus for the hasty lighting of fires when the danger period approaches. It has been found possible to raise the temperature of an orchard area from 6 to 10 degrees, which has afforded ample protection in the past. The weather bureau department of the office of the county pathologist has been able to prophesy the approach of every killing frost during the past five years, giving growers ample time to prepare for orchard heating.

Co-operative Marketing

An estimated three-fourths or more of the total fruit product of the valley is marketed through three different co-operative selling agencies, two of these agencies having headquarters in Medford and the third in Ashland. Not only do these agencies secure the highest market price for fruit, dividing the returns pro rata among the growers after the bare cost of selling has been deducted, but they also afford other advantages. They save thousands of dollars by supplying at cost all orchard equipment needed by the members, including spraying material, ladders for picking, boxes and paper for packing



Typical Winter Netts Block in Bloom

and supplies for orchard heating. They also aid in the picking of the fruit, and in the uniform packing. Training schools for packers are conducted each year, and pickers and packers are assigned to the different orchards of the valley as needed. Also, packing houses are provided for the packing of a considerable proportion of the fruit at various convenient shipping points in the valley. Storage warehouses take care of the surplus fruit when there is congestion in shipping.

Additional warehouses are being constructed, a combined pre-cooling and dry storage plant with a capacity of 100 cars having recently

been completed at Medford. Regular selling agents are employed by the co-operative unions, and affiliations are had with selling organizations maintaining agents in many parts of the world.

Summary of Orchard Profits

Orchard profits are variable, there being a wide range between the highest average prices per acre earned by the best orchards and the earning of some of the poorest orchards. Also much depends upon the management. The general rule is that an orchard demands as continuous and as watchful personal care as does any other agricultural enterprise, in order to insure average or exceptional suc-

cess. Also a high degree of specialization is necessary—though there are a number of sources of aid that every orchardist may draw upon without cost to himself. Market conditions for fruit vary from year to year; also the average yield. Occasionally bumper crops are harvested and record prices are received. Under these exceptional conditions almost unbelievable profits can be shown by some orchards—but these are not average, and as a rule such exceptionally managed and matured orchard tracts are not for sale. It is difficult to arrive at averages, hence the summary given in the "Soil Survey" booklet of the department of



Bear Creek Orchard in Bloom

agriculture may suffice. It is reported here, page 26: "Insofar as this valley is concerned, a well planted and cared for orchard will net yields on an average of from \$250 to \$500 an acre." Of course, high record earnings could be quoted, and figures could be shown from orchards that have averaged a return of \$1000 an acre for several years—these figures proving possibilities under exceptional market and crop conditions, and under exceptional orchard management.

Unlimited Fruit Possibilities

The fruit possibilities of Jackson county and the Rogue River valley are almost unlimited. Practically every variety of fruit common to the temperate zone will do especially well if care is taken in the selection of varieties and soils. The specialization in pears and peaches has been due entirely to market conditions. Hence the time may come when other varieties of fruit will

also become specialties. The 1910 census gave Jackson county first rank among all the counties of the state in the production of nectarines and apricots, third in the production of grapes and fourth in blackberries and dewberries. Yet there has been little specialization in these products, no attempt to produce them on a large scale. It is known that the Rogue River section could excel in certain varieties of grapes, world authorities having pronounced some of these varieties of more excellent quality than those of certain sections of the old world that have specialized in wine grapes for several hundreds of years. Rogue River valley grapes have high rank in the markets of the northwest, often commanding fancy prices for holiday and special trade. The section also produces high-grade cherries, the favorite varieties being Bing, Lambert and Royal Ann.

One of the important aids toward