

FRUITGROWING IN THE WAIKATO.

LESSONS FROM RUAKURA.

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THE Waikato district is eminently adapted for the cultivation of fruits of the Temperate Zone. In the earlier days of settlement commercial fruitgrowing was carried on in this part of the Dominion by quite a large number of orchardists, but of late years dairying has largely displaced the industry. There was therefore no necessity to demonstrate at Ruakura Farm of Instruction that fruit could be grown in the Waikato. An experimental orchard was, however, established in order to discover and demonstrate the varieties of different classes of fruits most suitable for the locality, to illustrate the most satisfactory methods of pruning, and to test the value of different spraying and other compounds for the control of disease.

In reporting on the orchard at the present time it must be remembered that the trees are yet young. Some have been six years planted, others but five years, while the remainder were subsequently added by annual plantings. The selected area at the first planting presented an exceedingly rough appearance, being undrained poor kahikatea swamp. Consequently it could not be expected that the trees would make much headway for a time, and experience has shown that progress is slow for the first two years under such conditions.

Success, however, with some varieties on this class of land is each season becoming further assured. On the other hand, with the vast number of varieties under test, it can be seen that some will prove unsuitable for this locality. They will not flourish in this environment with the same degree of success met with in other soils and situations.

To any one desiring to plant in this district, an inspection of the orchard would be amply repaid. It is most instructive to observe and compare how well one variety thrives while another alongside it can barely exist.

With the exception of a block laid out for spraying experiments, the number of trees of each variety is limited to two. In order to conduct trials with various spraying-compounds it was considered necessary to plant a block with a few well-known varieties, and a sufficient number