

Often insufficient attention is given to the grading of stone-fruit. Blemished and misshapen fruits should be discarded, and, to allow of proper packing and to get uniformity in the case, fruit should be sized. Most sizes of peaches and nectarines and of the larger varieties of plums should be packed on the diagonal pocket pack system. Too often one sees fruit of all sizes tipped into a case, and the fruit bumped down to allow of nailing on the lid. The result is much bruising and many stem punctures. Such injuries should be strictly avoided. It may even pay to pack large-sized peaches of certain dessert varieties in trays, and to wrap each fruit.

Picking should be done carefully, and fruit handled as little as possible. Picking-boxes should not be overfilled, and picked fruit should not be left standing out in the sun. Picking should be done at the correct stage of maturity, avoiding under-maturity and over-ripeness. The correct stage for apricots, peaches, nectarines, and plums is what is described as hard ripe—that is, a degree of maturity which will allow the fruit after picking to develop good flavour and to ripen. In apricots it is indicated by a yellow tinge over the fruit; in peaches and nectarines by the changing of the deep green; yellow-fleshed varieties should show up golden on the sunny side. Cherries are harvested nearly ripe. Fruit fully ripe or almost so should be graded out and disposed of near at hand. Several pickings should be made to secure uniformity in maturity and to avoid over-ripeness.

THINNING.

The importance of thinning may be again emphasized. The careful thinning of apples will help materially in the work of grading for export. What some may consider an expensive operation really helps to lighten the work later on when time is more precious. Diseased fruits should be got rid of now. To secure the greatest uniformity in size, one must be able to judge the capacity of the branch or lateral and thin accordingly. Weaker trees require heavier thinning than trees in robust growth. Fruit should be removed from near the tops of leaders, and it is advisable to remove all fruit from young trees in order to secure their maximum growth.

EXPORT OF APPLES AND PEARS.

One cannot look too far ahead in connection with these matters. Prospective shippers should soon be able to estimate the crop and the probable amount of fruit for export, basing the percentage on previous seasons' experience. Cases should be made up in readiness, and provision made for a supply of all necessary materials in good time. Dry cases are absolutely essential. Cases made up from green timber dry best if stacked in the open. The grading-machine and other shed equipment may require some overhauling. One should not wait till the season actually begins to attend to such necessary details.

CULTIVATION AND MANURING.

Cultivation should be continued right through December. Early in the New Year green cover-crops may be sown, and those contemplating their sowing will be well advised to inquire for seed in good time. Nitrate of soda or sulphate of ammonia, 1 lb. to 1½ lb. per tree, may be applied to weakly trees or those showing signs of having received a set-back through previous heavy cropping or drought.