

## OUTDOOR CULTURE OF TABLE GRAPES.

### SOME RECOMMENDED VARIETIES.

J. C. WOODFIN, Vine and Wine Instructor, Horticulture Division.

MANY people are under the impression that grapes can be grown successfully outdoors only in hot climates, being unaware that the grape is really a fruit of temperate climates, and that extremes both of heat and cold are unfavourable to the development of its highest qualities.

There are over five thousand varieties of grape-vines actually cultivated in the world, and among these are many kinds suitable for growing throughout New Zealand on favourable sites from Stewart Island to the North Cape. A number of these have been introduced into New Zealand from time to time by the Department of Agriculture from Europe and America, in order to test their suitability for growing under our climatic and other conditions, and some very satisfactory varieties have been selected and made available to the public. The Horticulture Division at the present time has some two hundred newly introduced varieties under observation in its experimental vineyard at Te Kauwhata, Lower Waikato district.

Not only are many varieties of vines suitable to our climatic conditions, but they come to perfection on our various soils. As a matter of fact, vines are not very exacting as regards soil, and they produce heavy crops on our poorest lands—gum-lands, light volcanic, and on almost pure sand. What struck me most about the vineyards on my arrival in this country after twenty-five years' residence in the vine-growing regions of Europe was the flourishing condition of the vines and the remarkably heavy crops they were carrying in comparison to what I had seen on the same varieties in Europe.

There is one class of land, however, which should be avoided. The vine has a strong dislike for wet feet, and no attempt should be made to grow it on swampy or wet soil before it has been properly drained. The proximity of trees should also be avoided, as the roots of these are apt to rob the soil of the vines' food. There is, however, little need to use such positions, as there is plenty of land in this country on favourable slopes facing the sun, which is now unprofitable, growing nothing better than manuka, fern, and blackberry, and which is quite suitable for growing grapes to perfection.

Central Otago, among other districts, shows great promise as a future viticultural centre. Grape-vines planted by miners in the early days are still producing excellent fruit, and in order to try the value of further varieties in the district the Horticulture Division planted a test plot of vines at Earnscleugh on the property of Mr. G. W. Marshall, who kindly placed the necessary land at our disposal. A similar plot was planted in the Moutere Hills district, Nelson, on the property of Mr. T. C. Brash, and other smaller plots are kept under observation throughout the Dominion.

The most important centre of table-grape production in the Dominion is situated round the Te Kauwhata experimental vineyard, where there are over thirty private growers who dispose of their fruit on the Auckland market and elsewhere.