

# In the Orchard and Vineyard

## Orchard Notes

### Spraying, Cultivation and Thinning

WITH the advent of warmer temperatures, activity in the orchard becomes more intensified.

As the trees become more heavily foliated the difficulty of securing adequate coverage without undue wastage of spray becomes greater. Avoid using coarse nozzles which, although giving penetration, tend to increase wastage. The most efficient unit from the points of view of adequate coverage and economy of spray material is the rod having two nozzles fitted with medium discs. The fine disc, although giving a fine mist spray, lacks sufficient penetration.

For control of leaf hopper, add nicotine sulphate 1-800 to the spray when the first of the nymphs are observed.

#### Cultivation

Cultivation is still an important item and during the next two months it should be constant. Weed growth around the trees should be suppressed, as uncontrolled weed growth not only provides shelter for bronze beetle and other pests, but through leaf transpiration dissipates valuable soil moisture during dry weather. Keep the soil stirred, is a good maxim to follow during the periods of dry weather.

#### Thinning Stone Fruits

For the next few weeks attention must be given to the thinning of the crops. As soon as the normal shedding of stone fruits is completed, a commencement should be made with thinning operations. No hard and fast rule can be laid down which can be rigidly adhered to for all trees. The extent and severity of the thinning will vary according to the crop carried. Size is an important factor in the sale of stone fruits and the larger sizes always command a premium. Large-sized fruit cannot be secured from heavily-laden trees and with such fruits as the Burbank plum upwards of 50 per cent. of the fruit may have to be removed in order to give the balance a chance to attain sufficient size.

The space left between fruits should vary according to crop but at least no two fruits should be allowed to touch. Should fruits be crowded and touching, the spread of brown rot is greatly facilitated. The spacing of the fruit is also governed by its position on the trees and the type of wood upon which

it is carried. Fruit carried on old spent wood will never attain the size of fruit on young well-conditioned wood and in the former instance it should be heavily thinned if not removed entirely, while fruit on the heavier and younger shoots need not be spaced as far apart. In other words, the older and thinner laterals should be thinned much more heavily than the younger and heavier laterals.

#### Thinning Pip Fruits

Following the completion of the thinning of the stone fruit crop, a commencement may be made in December on the thinning of the pip fruit crop. It is wise to carry out the work in two operations. The first should consist of the thinning of the clusters to permit of satisfactory spray penetration and where the set is heavy the clusters themselves should be spaced according to the age and size of the laterals and shoots upon which they are carried. The second operation consists of the removal during January and early February of diseased and damaged fruits, thus reducing the

quantity of cull fruit which will be harvested, graded and then have to be discarded. It is recognised that with the shortage of labour, growers will wish to economise as far as possible with orchard work, but thinning is an essential operation and cannot be eliminated. It well repays the labour expended on it.

#### Care of Grafts

Where grafting has been done the grafts should be looked over to see that the ties have been loosened or cut as growth commences so that sap movement and growth of the graft will not be restricted. Where rapid growth is being made some support should be given to the shoots to obviate their being blown off. Many failures have been the result of failure to support the strongly growing shoot which has not yet become firmly attached to the stock.

—R. G. I. HAMILTON, District Supervisor, Horticulture Division, Auckland.

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