



## HARVESTING, PACKING, AND MARKETING STONE FRUIT

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**W**HEN by a combination of efficient orchard practice and favourable weather a good crop of stone fruit has been matured, the successful harvesting, packing, and marketing of it are the best gauge of each season's success or failure. The importance of attending to these operations with the highest degree of efficiency therefore cannot be over-stressed.

**T**HE perishable nature of practically all stone fruits necessitates the greatest care during harvesting, packing, and transport to market. Stone fruit must be handled literally like eggs if the produce is to reach the market in good condition. Careless handling causes stem punctures, undue pressure with fingers causes bruising, and long finger nails will cut the skin and start rapid decay. In America gloves are frequently worn by operators, and this practice has much to commend it when dealing with high-quality lines.

### Judging Maturity

To determine the correct stage of maturity for picking requires specialised knowledge on the part of the grower. Fruit intended for more distant markets requires to be picked in a firmer condition than that for nearer markets. The tendency of some growers in recent years appears to have been to err on the safe side in this respect, with the result that many immature lines have arrived on the market and in the shops, the fruit being small, green, and unattractive. With this class of fruit transit losses through brown rot and wastage are undoubtedly few, but the indirect loss

in value must be considerable in a season of normal supply and demand.

Apricots for distant markets should be picked when the ground colour is turning to light yellow or straw.

Peaches should be harvested when the fruit is fully developed and the flesh still firm. Between development to full size and full ripeness peaches increase in sugar content, and during that period it is estimated that the weight of fruit increases by more than 12 per cent. That indicates the importance of permitting peaches to remain on the trees as long as possible and yet arrive on the market in good condition. Not only does the grower gain by an increased weight of crop, but the consumer receives a higher-quality fruit.

Cherries, especially early soft-fleshed varieties, should be picked while still very firm. Early varieties, which when tree-ripened are dark red to black, should be picked when they have attained a good red colour and are fairly sweet. The later varieties, which will carry in more matured condition,