

PACKING AND TRANSPORTING STONE FRUIT



Care in packing will avoid damage during loading and transport.

should be a dark or purplish red before being harvested. White or yellow varieties should be harvested when they have attained a good typical colour and are fairly sweet.

Care in Picking

Stone fruit picked at the desirable stage of maturity will readily come off with a slight upward twist of the hand, but care should be taken not to inflict undue pressure on the fruit. Bruising during picking will result in early development of brown rot and soft decay. To avoid bruising, light picking-tins which are rigid and of moderate capacity are preferable to the large canvas picking-bags used for pip fruits. The fruit should be carefully placed in the picking receptacles and never thrown or dropped in.

Every precaution should be taken to prevent spread of brown rot, and infected fruit should not be allowed to come in contact with sound fruit. If necessary, the picking-tins should be regularly sterilised.

Cherries should be picked with the stems attached or the skin will be broken and the fruit will decay during transport to the market. While ensuring the detachment of the stem, care must be taken not to break off the fruit spur, which should remain as a potential production unit of the tree for future seasons.

Sizing and Grading

With the possible exception of cherries, all stone fruit requires sizing as a prerequisite to good packing, and a sizing machine over which the fruit

passes to the packer is a valuable asset. Fruit put over the machine should be of firm maturity and moderate size, and the machine and bins should be kept free from dirt and grit. For large fruit of greater maturity and higher quality careful hand treatment is preferable.

Though size is one of the principal factors regulating the market price, grading for quality also influences values. Consignments packed in grades according to colour and amount of blemish on individual fruits will command attention and a price commensurate with the quality. First grade should consist of well-formed, well-coloured fruit typical of the variety and free from pests and diseases, and

any blemishes should be very slight. Second- and third-grade fruit may be of a slightly lower standard, but should not contain defects which may cause the fruit to decay or make it unattractive to the purchaser.

Recommendations for Packing

No. 6 standard case is recommended for packing firm, graded fruit, and the diagonal pack should be adopted to ensure the minimum of bruising. The cases should be lined with clean white paper. Correctness in height is necessary to avoid damage to the fruit during lidding. For large-sized, high-quality, mature fruit the use of trays as containers is recommended. Attractively displayed in coloured paper shavings or wood wool, high-quality fruit should be packed in one-layer trays either crated or wired together in threes. This method enables the fruit to be sold in smaller quantities, and with the absence of tight packing the risk of bruising is lessened considerably.

In packing cherries care should be taken to fill the corners of the box and to see that the minimum net weight is contained in each package. "Facing" of cherries can be done with advantage by placing the first layer of fruit in the box with the stems toward the packer, an effort being made to "row" the fruit as uniformly as possible; the remainder of the box is filled without any definite arrangement, but taking care to fill the corners and to have no fruit extending over the sides. The bottom is then nailed on and the box reversed for labelling. The first layer of faced fruit becomes the top layer and presents a pleasing appearance when the box is opened.



The perishable nature of stone fruit necessitates the greatest care in handling during transport.