

FACTORS INFLUENCING QUALITY OF PIP FRUIT

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WITH the importation of oranges and bananas approaching pre-war quantities, pip-fruit growers will need to make every endeavour to improve the quality of their produce if it is to hold a favourable position on local markets. Care in the handling of pip fruit during harvesting, grading, and packing will assist materially in ensuring that the fruit arrives on the market in a condition more attractive to the buyer, whose confidence in its quality is vital to the welfare of the industry.

THE elimination as far as is practicable of small sizes of pip fruits is desirable, and, when pruning, some consideration can be given to this problem and the initial steps taken to deal with it. With the elimination of a large percentage of fruit buds when indications are for a heavy crop the following results will be achieved:—

The size of fruit will be improved without any appreciable crop reduction.

The increase in size of the fruit will make the crop more economical to harvest.

Thinning will be reduced to the one operation of breaking up bunches.

Foliage will be improved both in size of leaf and tone.

Russet blemish will be reduced.



[Sparrow Industrial Pictures Ltd. photo.]

The tree will develop its crop and at the same time produce fruit buds for the following year, tending toward more regular cropping.

Adequate leaf surface is vital to the production of quality fruit, and for this reason the tree must be maintained in a vigorous condition. The cutting out of the spurs, and fruiting on younger wood, improves both the size and quality of the fruit.

Immature Fruit

The practice of picking apple varieties too early is not to be commended. Even if the fruit does not shrivel, the flavour usually associated with each particular variety is not fully developed. Where large staffs are employed and varieties have gaps between harvesting dates the grower often faces the problem of having to decide whether he will have the staff idle for a few days or pick immature fruit. By carefully planning the season's activities the grower can reduce this gap considerably as well as improve the quality of his fruit. A considerably higher percentage of fancy-grade fruit, particularly in the coloured varieties, will more than compensate for any effort involved.

Over-anxiety to begin harvesting is likely to lead to difficulties. When the first variety is finished the grower often feels compelled to continue harvesting to keep staff employed. By starting later, when his earliest variety would be slightly more mature but still in prime condition for export, he would find probably that the succeeding varieties were ready by the time he came to deal with them. However, if a gap in harvesting dates still existed, case making and other incidental work could occupy the staff for a few days.

In the harvesting of pears the reverse of the situation as it relates to apples usually applies. Pears left on trees too long ripen too quickly when picked. They are difficult to transport to markets and are often mealy and tasteless. The Williams Bon Chretien variety is one which requires picking at the right stage of maturity if the magnificent flavour of this pear is to be appreciated. Maturing as it does



[National Publicity Studios photo.]

Careful handling of the fruit at this stage is essential. The pickers are shown placing the picking receptacles into the cases before releasing the canvas bottoms.