

established and better able to withstand dry periods during the following summer.

To give the trees a good start a mixture of equal parts of superphosphate and blood and bone at the rate of 1lb. a tree should be applied to the soil in the planting positions and well mixed with the soil some 3 or 4 weeks before the trees are planted. Before each tree is planted the rooting system should be examined and any rootlets which are damaged or misshapen should be pruned off. In planting it is important to tread the soil firmly around the roots so that the young trees have a firm anchorage.

Planting Distances

Planting distances between trees will vary according to whether they are planted in a block or in hedge rows.

In block plantings it is advisable to plant the trees on the square system to facilitate orchard management. They should be set out in rows 15ft. apart with 15ft. between trees; at these distances about 190 trees an acre will be required. Although there are few, if any, old plantings of feijoas in New Zealand, it appears from present indications that if trees are planted in blocks at distances less than 15ft. apart each way, overcrowding will result eventually. When grown as a hedge bordering a driveway or along an orchard boundary for ornamental or low-shelter purposes the trees may be planted from 4ft. 6in. to 8ft. apart, according to individual requirements.

Pruning

For the first 2 years after being planted the trees should be encouraged to produce vigorous growth and at the same time a strong framework should be built up. In block plantings, where fruit production is the main consideration, shaping of the trees is important. In a well-shaped tree the fork (where the main limbs branch) should be at least 12in. above the ground; all shoots which develop below the fork should be removed periodically.



Young tree pruned to develop a shapely, balanced head.



[Rendell's Photo Service photo.]
Prolific growth made by 6-year-old trees growing on land which has a pH of 6.2.

When feijoas are planted as a hedge the pruning of the young tree to encourage the development of a single trunk before the tree is allowed to branch is not always essential. It is, however, considered advisable to develop a single trunk, for trees so shaped grow into sturdy specimens and cultivation and harvesting operations are greatly facilitated. When the foundation of the young tree is being built 5 to 7 main branches that will develop into a shapely, balanced head should be chosen for the main arms. If necessary, these may be shortened back in the early stages to induce lateral growth and preserve the symmetry of the tree. Once the tree has developed a shapely, balanced head, very little subsequent pruning is necessary or desirable; all that may be required is a possible thinning out or shortening back of straggling lateral growth. Excessive thinning of lateral growth should be avoided, for the wood is very brittle, and if pruning is overdone, severe breakages are likely to occur even if trees are exposed to moderate winds.

Manuring

Some growers believe that little if any manure is required to produce fruit; some believe its moderate to heavy use stimulates growth at the expense of fruit production. That may occur if heavy applications of inorganic nitrogenous fertilisers are used regularly, but more probably failure to set fruit is due to propagation of the plants from seed and to lack of pollination. The causes of failure to set fruit may be minimised by raising trees vegetatively and planting different varieties together.

Many different mixtures of fertilisers are used by growers of feijoas, but on most soils regular applications of a mixture containing blood and bone and sulphate of potash have produced satisfactory growth and crop yields. The quantity of manure applied each year varies with the soil type, the age of the trees, and quantity

of fruit they produce. As a guide about 1lb. of a mixture containing 5 parts of blood and bone and 1 part of sulphate of potash by weight should be applied for each year of the tree's age from the time of planting up to a maximum dressing of 10 to 15lb. per tree for mature trees.

The manure should be applied in two dressings. The first, containing the sulphate of potash and about half the blood and bone, should be broadcast around the trees in August. The remainder of the blood and bone should be applied at the end of December or early in January and lightly hoed into the soil.

Lime Requirements

It has been stated frequently that the feijoa prefers an acid soil and that it will not tolerate applications of lime. From the general growth of feijoas in New Zealand there is little evidence to support this claim, as plants grow and fruit well on land that has a fairly high pH value. (The pH value of a soil is determined by its acid or alkaline content; pH 7 represents a neutral soil.)

On heavy soils applications of lime improve the soil texture and its use on such soils is beneficial for growing feijoas. On light soils lime applications seem of little importance to the plants. The excellent growth made by 6-year-old trees growing on land which has a pH of 6.2 can be seen from the photograph above.

General Maintenance

Feijoa trees have a mass of fibrous feeding roots near the soil surface and may be damaged easily by careless use of implements. Maintenance cultivation close to the trees should be only deep enough to control weed growth and conserve soil moisture during spring and summer. Where clean cultivation is practised the growing of cover crops will enrich the organic content of the soil. Blue lupins or oats provide good humus and during summer or early autumn