

Pruning Fruit Trees from Trailers

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THE pruning of fruit trees is often a cold and irksome job, especially if wet weather or heavy frosts occur. On many wet soils or when the ground begins to thaw after a frost the soil sticks to boots, with the result that the steps of the ladders become coated with sticky mud. This not only makes working conditions unpleasant, but also means that the workers' feet get cold, ladders become heavy to shift and dangerous to climb, and time is lost scraping mud from them. Messrs. Waigh and Sons, Roxburgh, have adopted a method which overcomes these unpleasant conditions and speeds up the work to such an extent that it has reduced their pruning time by approximately 30 per cent. of that taken when ladders were used from the ground.

THE method necessitates the use of a tractor and two flat-topped, 4-wheeled trailers. The trailers are connected one behind the other so that the distance between their centres is the same as that between the fruit trees. Two men prune from each trailer, and a fifth man drives the tractor and assists in pruning so that both trees are finished together. Once work has begun in the morning the only worker to step on the ground is the tractor driver.

Each trailer is about 2ft. 6in. high and 16ft. long. On both front and back of each trailer there is a 12in. x 2in. plank which is bolted to the platform of the trailer by one bolt so that it can be pivoted in any direction required. These planks are pushed into position with the feet so that they extend out over the sides of the trailers and the workers can then



Three men working on the front trailer in the system described in this article. The worker on the right is standing on an outrigger board and the worker on the left is using a ladder mounted on an outrigger board.

walk round a little more than half of each tree from each trailer. The planks are swung back over the body of the trailer before the trailers are moved to the next two trees.

Two short ladders (about 3ft. 6in. high) are also carried on each trailer to be used for the higher branches. Ladders of this height used on the trailers are equal to 6ft. ladders worked from ground level, and they stand much more firmly on the trailer than they do on the ground. These ladders are made so that they can be placed on the outrigger planks (see ladder on left in illustration above). When the ladders are placed on the bottom outriggers they rest on the bottom rungs instead of on the legs.

Only half of each row is pruned at a time, the trailers being hauled along both sides of each row. If the trees vary considerably in size, it is simple for one worker to step from one trailer to the other and assist on the larger tree so that both trees are completed at the same time. Only a few seconds are required to shift the trailers to each new position, whereas if ladders are used, a number of shifts have to be made to prune each tree. Also far less time is required in climbing up and down ladders from the trailers because of the shortness of the ladders.

Thanks are extended to Messrs. Waigh and Sons for the particulars given of their equipment.



Some of the positions from which workers can prune under the two-trailer system are shown in this illustration.