

Trends in

Sub-tropical Fruit Production and Plantings in New Zealand

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THOUGH no district in New Zealand has a truly sub-tropical climate parts of the Auckland Province are warm enough for a number of sub-tropical fruits to flourish and several are produced commercially. Notable among these are tree tomatoes (*Cyphomandra betacea*), Chinese gooseberries (*Actinidia chinensis*), passion fruit (*Passiflora edulis*), and feijoas (*Feijoa sellowiana*). This article discusses production and planting trends.

THE table below shows the numbers of plants, approximate acreages, and estimated production of these sub-tropical fruits in the various districts in 1956.

An extremely wet autumn and winter in 1956 caused a few losses of tree tomato plants and Chinese gooseberry vines in heavy soils and poorly drained areas at Auckland and Kerikeri, but the winter was mild and the few light frosts recorded caused little damage. Good crops of all varieties were obtained.

Brown spot disease (*Alternaria pasiflorae*) of passion vines has been more severe than usual, possibly due to the wet 1956 season and would be likely to affect 1957 yields. Prospects for the 1957 crop of the other sub-tropical fruits were good, but final production figures are not yet available.

Planting Trends and Outlook

Planting trends and market outlook for the various types of sub-tropical fruits grown commercially are as follows:—

Tree Tomatoes

Plantings of tree tomatoes during 1956 were not as heavy as in the previous year, but they were still substantial and the Dominion total of these plants increased by more than 8 per cent. to surpass the peak of 103,000 plants recorded in 1951. Of the 17,000 new plants recorded, 7000 were planted at Kerikeri. The remainder were almost equally distributed between the Auckland, Tauranga, and Te Puke districts. Removals of tree tomatoes amounted to 8500 plants, most

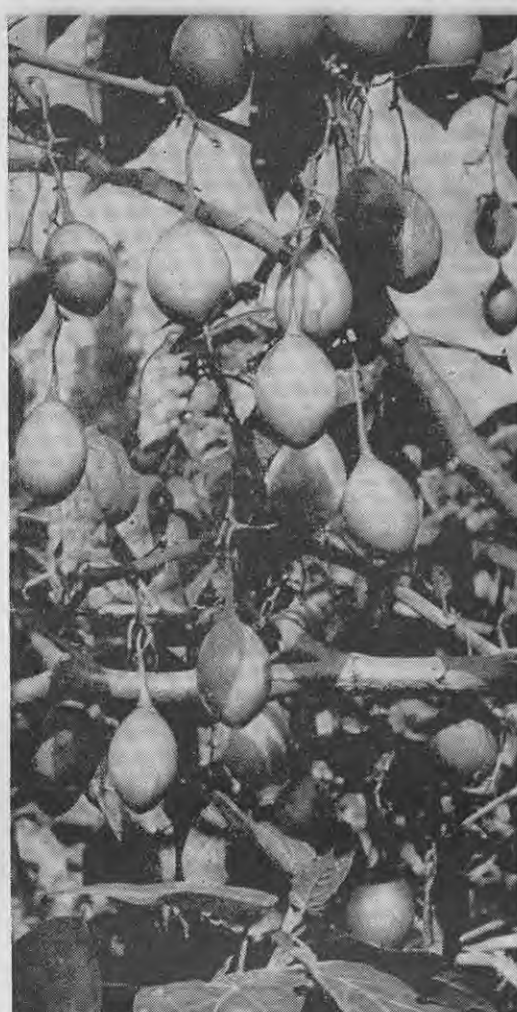
of them being lost at Auckland and Tauranga.

Favourable prices for tree tomatoes continued in 1956, but as a result of very heavy plantings made in 1955 production was expected to rise sharply in 1957 to a level of more than 800 tons. The market is likely to be over-supplied at the peak of the season and returns may be lower than in previous years.

Provided no widespread damaging frosts occur to affect the position, a sharp upward trend in yields is likely to continue as recent plantings come into bearing, and there is considerable danger of over-production in future. Export outlets for canned and fresh fruit are being investigated. Just over a ton of fresh tree tomatoes was shipped to Australia in 1955, following up the export of 5½ tons the previous year, but at present there is little prospect of expanding this market very much. Small sample shipments of canned tree tomatoes to overseas markets were to be tried in 1957.

Chinese Gooseberries

There was further expansion of the area planted in Chinese gooseberries in 1956. Nearly 2000 new vines were recorded, mainly at Tauranga and Te Puke, and only 100 vines were removed, because of neglect, at Auckland and Tauranga. Production of these fruits can be expected to almost double within the next 4 or 5 years and supplies reaching the market during the peak of the season are likely to become excessive. Realising this danger, growers are looking to cool storage to spread their crops in future.



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Because of heavy plantings in 1955 production of tree tomatoes is expected to rise sharply and the market may be over-supplied at the peak of the season. Export outlets for canned and fresh fruit are being investigated.

Export to Australia and the United Kingdom is also continuing, 26 tons being shipped in 1956. Owing to shipping delays much of the fruit was soft when it arrived and lower prices were received than in previous years.

Passion Fruit and Feijoas

The area planted in passion fruit and feijoas remains more or less static. Te Puke is now the main centre of passion fruit production.

ESTIMATED ACREAGES* AND PRODUCTION IN TONS OF SUB-TROPICAL FRUITS IN NEW ZEALAND DURING 1956

District	Tree tomatoes		Chinese gooseberries		Passion fruit		Feijoas		Approximate total acreage	Total production (tons)				
	Plants	Acreage	Plants	Acreage	Plants	Acreage	Plants	Acreage						
Kerikeri ..	43,700	125	330	4,300	36	45	2,500	10	5	2,800	11	5	182	385
Auckland ..	15,400	44	130	2,100	18	40	1,300	5	4	2,200	9	8	76	182
Tauranga ..	29,100	83	115	4,400	37	60	4,300	17	7	3,500	14	14	151	196
Te Puke ..	19,600	56	120	4,500	37	70	6,900	28	55	700	3	1	124	246
Totals ..	107,800	308	695	15,300	128	215	15,000	60	71	9,200	37	28	533	1,009

* Acreage based on 350 tree tomatoes, 250 feijoas and passion fruit, and 120 Chinese gooseberry plants per acre.