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TREE FRUITS FOR THE HOME ORCHARD IN WESTERN OREGON

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The home orchard is again commanding attention. Several factors are responsible for this revival of interest. The present scarcity of fruits, the high prices one has to pay for fruits and the urge to produce food for the war effort, all are contributing to the renewed interest in fruit growing. Aside from this, however, there is a more fundamental reason. Home owners, who until now have been interested primarily in the beautification of their surroundings, now realize that some fruit plants, at least, have a place in their enterprise. They are becoming conscious of the fact that it is feasible to combine the aesthetic with the practical.

When considering fruits for the home, several factors must be taken into account. The matter of space or land available must be carefully considered. Some fruit trees such as the standard types of apples, pears and cherries require much space. This may be of no concern to the person who lives on a farm or on a suburban acreage, but it is of vital concern to the individual who must confine his efforts to one or even two city lots. It is questionable, in fact, whether the city lot gardener should attempt to grow the large types of fruit trees. Perhaps he should confine his efforts to bush or vine fruits or to certain types of dwarf and espalier trees.

The matter of soil and drainage should receive some attention. Fruit trees require a soil that is deep and well drained. Low lying soils that are wet during the winter months are not suited to orchard culture. The type of soil is not so important. Fruit trees do well on a variety of soil types provided these meet the requirements of depth and drainage.

Then, there is the important factor of care and upkeep. This should be considered carefully when selecting the kinds and varieties of fruits to grow. All fruit trees require care, but some require more than others. This applies particularly to the item of insect pests and diseases. While it is still possible to grow some fruits without systematic spraying, other fruits must be sprayed if desirable fruit is to be produced. Apples, pears, peaches and cherries are of this category. One should not plant these fruits unless he is prepared to do the necessary spraying and to practice general insect and disease control. The person who is not prepared or willing to do these things should confine his efforts to other fruits. Plums, prunes, small fruits and grapes will still produce fairly clean crops without too much spraying.

Individual preference, of course, should be considered when selecting fruits for the home planting. The home orchard should satisfy the desires of the owner. Most persons have individual preferences as to types and varieties. Fortunately the home owner in western Oregon has a wide choice in the kinds and varieties of fruit he may grow.

Some consideration must be given to pollination or cross fertilization. While many of the common fruits will produce well without cross pollination, some are self-sterile and must be pollenized by other varieties planted in the immediate vicinity. Most varieties of apples are self-sterile but any two varieties planted close together will usually pollinate each other. Pears are also self-sterile but since all varieties do not bloom at the same time, only certain combinations of varieties are successful. Bartlett, in the Willamette Valley, is successfully pollinated by Fall Butter and Sackel.

Sweet cherries probably offer the most serious pollination problem. The best known varieties such as Bing, Royal Ann and Lambert are not only self-sterile but they are also inter-sterile. This means they do not pollinate themselves, neither will they pollinate each other. To grow them successfully, one must provide pollenizing varieties such as Black Tartarian, Black Republican, Governor Wood and Centennial.

Filbert varieties must be chosen very carefully to insure proper cross pollination. Barcelona, the leading variety, sheds its pollen too early to make it a pollenizer for itself or for other common varieties. Du Chilly has been the outstanding pollenizer for Barcelona. Du Chilly, however, is not pollinated by Barcelona, so a third variety is usually introduced for this purpose. The third variety may be selected from varieties such as Davians, White Aveline, Montebello and Nottingham. The Brixnut filbert is successfully pollinated by Bolwyller.

On the other hand, there is a large list of fruits that are self-fruitful and that do not require cross pollination. This list includes the European plums and prunes, the sour cherry, the Duke cherry, the apricot, the fig, the quince, and the English walnut. A few of the varieties of Oriental plums are more or less self-sterile, but there appears to be no difficulty when two or more varieties of these are planted. The common varieties of peaches are all self-fruitful with the exception of the J. H. Hale. This variety requires cross pollination by some other variety.

When space is at a premium or when it is desirable to combine fruit growing with the landscaping around the premises, one should not overlook the dual-purpose horticultural plants. By this is meant trees, shrubs or vines that are ornamental, yet that are prized for their fruits. In this grouping should be included some of the flowering apples. The Hopa Crab, for example, produces both fruits and flowers of merit. The grape is also a fine dual-purpose plant. Grape arbors and grape trellises have a place in landscaping and, at the same time, may be a source of fine fruit. The sour cherry has both ornamental and fruit value. The blueberry may also offer possibilities. As a shrub it is unusually attractive and its fruit is highly prized.

No discussion of fruits for home planting is complete without some comment regarding dwarf trees. The idea of growing dwarf fruit trees appeals to many people,

because they see in these trees the possibility of producing fruits on small plots of ground. There is no doubt but that the dwarf tree will occupy a place in the horticulture of the future.

At present, however, there are unsolved problems connected with the growing of dwarf trees in western Oregon. The supply of such trees is very limited due to propagation difficulties and to present labor shortages in the nurseries. Then, too, there is still some question as to how to produce a satisfactory dwarf tree for this region. Dwarf trees are usually obtained by grafting the standard varieties on slow-growing rootstocks. Unfortunately, however, a rootstock that may produce a satisfactory dwarf tree for one section of the country may not produce a satisfactory tree for some other region. Rootstocks that produce dwarf trees in Eastern United States often fail to produce dwarf trees here, where growth is more vigorous and luxurious. Experiments are now under way at the Oregon Agricultural Experiment Station to find satisfactory dwarfing stocks for Oregon, but the results of these experiments cannot be known for some time.

The espalier tree offers some possibility for the person who is interested in fruit trees for small areas. These are dwarf trees in a sense, but they owe their small size to pruning and training methods as well as to dwarfing rootstocks. Espalier trees have been grown here for some time and they have passed the experimental stage. These trees are available from local nurseries.

Selected Varieties

The list of varieties given here does not include all that are available to the home orchardist. It does include, however, varieties that are desirable and that have proven their adaptability to western Oregon conditions. Some may be disappointed to find that a number of the old time favorites are omitted from the list. Two reasons account for the omissions. Many of the older varieties are no longer propagated by nurserymen and are, therefore, not available except to the person who is willing to propagate them himself. Then, too, many of the varieties that were once popular have been supplanted by sorts that are superior in quality and that are easier to grow.

Apples

There are many fine varieties of apples and the home orchardist has a wide choice. Yellow Transparent and Red June are two of the best early sorts. Among the late summer varieties, Gravenstein is certainly one of the best. This apple is unsurpassed for fresh use and for culinary purposes. Jonathan, Grimes Golden, Delicious and Golden Delicious are all good late fall varieties. With cold storage these will keep well into the winter. Ortley and White Winter Pearmain are very good winter sorts and Yellow Newtown is probably the best of the real late keepers.

Apricots

Apricots are not recommended for most parts of western Oregon, although they do well in the vicinity of Ashland in the southern part of the state. Those who care to experiment with this fruit, however, may select from varieties such as Perfection, Tilton, Moorpark, Lewis, Blenheim and Chinese.

Cherries

Cherries are highly prized by most people and they are well adapted to western Oregon. The most popular varieties among the sweet cherries are Bing, Royal Ann and Lambert. Royal Ann is a white-fleshed sort, while Bing and Lambert are classed as black cherries. These varieties require cross pollination and they should be interplanted by pollenizing varieties as already indicated.

Montmorency and Early Richmond are probably the best of the sour types of cherries. These varieties, as a rule, do not require cross pollination.

The so-called Duke cherries are prized by some persons. In type these are intermediate between the sweet and sour cherries. May Duke and Late Duke are the best known varieties. These cherries do very well in this region.

Crabapples

Crabapples are appreciated by some home owners. The variety known as Hyslop is undoubtedly one of the best. It is a large, highly colored sort that is well adapted to this section. Hopa and Dolga are good dual-purpose varieties. Other good sorts are Martha and Transcendent. Crabapples are successfully pollinated by apple varieties.

Figs

With the proper choice of varieties and with reasonable care, figs of good quality can be grown in this region. It is true that the trees may be injured during severe winters, but trees so damaged usually made a rapid recovery. Lattarula is undoubtedly a good variety for this section. Granata and Neverala also appear to be good and the variety recently introduced under the name of King is well worthy of trial.

Filberts

Barcelona is the leading variety of filbert in western Oregon. As indicated in a previous paragraph, this variety requires a pollenizer which may be selected from among such sorts as Du Chilly, Daviana, White Aveline and Nottingham. Brixnut and Halle's Giant are sometimes recommended but these also require pollenizers.

Nectarines

Nectarines do quite well in parts of southern Oregon, but they are not adapted to the Willamette Valley. Queta, Goldmine and New Boy are among the best of the nectarine varieties.

Peaches

When one is prepared to spray for the control of blight and leaf curl, the peach is one of the most satisfactory home orchard fruits. There are many fine varieties of peaches and most of them are well adapted to this region. Arp Beauty is certainly one of the best early yellow-fleshed sorts. Hale Haven, Elberta and

Slappey are fine varieties for canning. Among the white-fleshed peaches, Champion is one of the best. Other good varieties are J. H. Hale, Golden Jubilee, Ideal, Early Elberta, Improved Elberta, Early Crawford and Rochester.

The above varieties are all of the freestone types. Clingstone varieties are not so well adapted to the region as a whole, although they do fairly well in southern Oregon. Among the more popular clingstone varieties are Tuskena (Tuscon), Lemon, Miller and Heath.

Pears

In the case of pears, the home orchardist is somewhat limited in the number of varieties he may select. Bartlett is undoubtedly the most reliable. This pear is very good as fresh fruit and it is excellent for canning. Late varieties such as Anjou, Comice, Bosc and Winter Nelis are all very fine pears, but these should be attempted only by persons who are willing to give them the intricate care they require. Seckel is an old favorite with many people. It is fairly satisfactory when properly grown.

Plums

Plums are frequently overlooked by the home orchardist. Much of this is due to the fact that the better types of plums are not generally known and are not fully appreciated. Washington and Jefferson are two excellent varieties of the Green Gage type. These are unsurpassed for canning and they are highly desirable for fresh use. The varieties Wickson, Climax, Mariposa, Formosa, Shiro, Peach, President, Satsuma and Santa Rosa offer a wide range of color, flavor and season and all do quite well in western Oregon. Shropshire Blue Damson is the standard of quality for jams and jellies.

Prunes

Good varieties of prunes are still few in number, but the list now includes some very fine prunes, all of which are at home in this region. Italian is still the best all-purpose prune since it lends itself to a number of uses. This is one of the so-called tart prunes. The person who wants to try other sorts, however, can choose from such varieties as Imperial, Sugar, Date and Miller's Sweet - all of which are of the sweet type. Weatherspoon might appeal to persons who desire a prune that is intermediate between the sweet and tart types.

Quince

While the quince is not a popular fruit it is especially well adapted to western Oregon. Orange and Van Demon are good varieties.

Walnuts

Franquette is the outstanding variety of English walnut for western Oregon. Mayette and Meylan are sometimes planted but are usually less desirable.