

PITFALLS OF THE AMATEUR FRUIT GROWER

By Raymond Bush

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The material contained in this fine article was presented as a lecture before the Royal Horticultural Society of England on October 7, 1947. The writer starts the article with the following interesting observations. "This is intended to be a talk to amateur growers, but it is a popular mistake to regard the term "amateur" as meaning someone who is not skilful. As a retired commercial grower I take my hat off to the skilful amateur and confine my remarks to the inexperienced amateur."

"I make the statement after considerable thought that the amateur gardener with fruit in his garden could, as a rule, treble the amount of fruit which he grows simply by attention to pest control." Most horticulturists would agree with the above remarks, especially in relation to the skill of many amateurs and the need for emphasis on insect and disease control.

Underestimation

"If I had to name the most common pitfall for the unwary fruit-grower it would be Underestimation of the Difficulties. Many people seem to think it is dead easy to grow fruit. It may seem easy, as my friend the late Editor of the *Countryman* once wrote about apple-growing: "There is no mystery whatever about it. It is simply a matter of growing the right fruit on the right stocks, planted in the right way in the right soil, on the right site, pruning in the right way and hoeing in the right way, picking and packing it in the right way, and either storing it in the right way or marketing it in the right markets. Merely that? Not at all. There is also spraying at the right time with the right stuff three or four or more times a year."

Varieties and Pollination

In this section Mr. Bush views with satisfaction the trend toward fewer varieties. He suggests that although the backyard gardener may select high quality fruits which please his fancy, yet he should confine his plantings to a rela-

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tively small number of varieties.

Although pollination is an important factor in fruit production, it is an easy one for the fruit grower to control. If a self-unfruitful variety has been planted, bouquets of blossoms from a pollinizing variety may be placed in cans of water in the center of the trees. A permanent solution can be secured by grafting a suitable variety upon a branch of the self-unfruitful plant.

Site, Soil and Planting

A serious pitfall for the amateur is trying to grow fruit in a low spot where spring frosts will play havoc with his fruit blossoms. The importance of an elevated frost-free site is emphasized.

The best soil is a deep well-drained loam. Drainage must be provided for heavy clay soils. Irrigation or mulch will help maintain moisture in sandy localities.

Planting should be done with care. Remove plants from their shipping

packages as soon as they are received. The plants should be set firmly in the ground, slightly deeper than they were in the nursery.

Overcrowding is a very common pitfall. If various crops are inter-planted, be sure such a practice does not interfere with the spray program or cultural operations. When rows are close together or closely interplanted irrigation may be necessary during dry periods.

Spraying

According to Mr. Bush "Failure to spray is a real pitfall". This is as true in the United States as in England. "Spraying is an exact science and no liberties are allowed to the beginner. He must do what he is told or pay the penalty."

"You cannot expect fruit to grow itself. At first, spraying is bound to be a nuisance and a messy job, but if recommendations are followed the results will delight you." —W.P.J.



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