

The Nursery Stock Identification Problem

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Anyone at all familiar with the apple can readily distinguish between the fruits of McIntosh and Delicious. On the other hand, identifying the one or two year old tree of these same or other varieties is something which very few can do.

Although many of the older nurserymen had acquired great skill in identifying young trees, yet mixture of varieties in the nursery was very common 30 to 40 years ago. Recognizing the seriousness of this situation at the time, Dr. J. K. Shaw, of the Massachusetts Agricultural Experiment Station, began a careful study of leaf characters of apple varieties. In 1921, encouraged by the Experiment Station and backed by the Massachusetts Fruit Growers Association, Dr. Shaw began to apply his knowledge, by examining two-year old trees of several varieties of apples in a nearby commercial nursery for trueness to name. It wasn't long before Dr. Shaw's services were requested by many other nurseries including

some in Connecticut and New York.

According to the original plan, only two-year old trees were inspected, and these were labeled with a lead seal, bearing the variety name. This method proved time consuming, expensive and sometimes harmful to the tree. The plan which is now being followed was therefore adopted. By the new plan, both one and two-year old trees are examined. Only varieties for such kinds of fruit as the particular nurseryman desires to have inspected are checked. When the inspection is completed a report is given to the nurseryman for his guidance. A Statement of Inspection is also issued, which the nurseryman can use for his advertising.

Following in Dr. Shaw's footsteps, a number of his colleagues at Massachusetts made studies of plant characters of several other fruits. As a result, the present inspection service covers not only apple, but also pear, plum and cherry varieties. Peach tree identification hasn't been worked out as yet.

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