

Reviews and Abstracts

The Complete Fruit-Grower. W. E. Shewell, Cooper Faber & Faber, London, 1960, 288 pp., \$4.20.

There is much literature in the English language on fruit gardening (as distinguished from commercial fruit-raising), from Parkinson's *Paradisi in Sole Paradisus Terrestris* (1629) to that excellent illustrated pamphlet published by the Royal Horticultural Society entitled, *The Fruit Garden Displayed* (1951). But very little of it is American or relates to American conditions.* None-the-less much can be learned from English methods and experiences.

Mr. Shewell-Cooper is apparently a prolific writer on "how to do it" books on vegetable and flower growing. He is founder of a horticultural training college, and manages a commercial fruit farm, using organic methods. He thus draws from his own personal experience as well as from demonstrational work done by the College staff. He writes simply and clearly, and is not afraid to state what is not known, or that he is merely repeating what he has heard.

The book begins with a most useful chapter entitled "Where to Grow the Fruit," which deals with lawns, borders, walls, and the "fruit garden." For the difficult north wall, with its absence of direct sunlight, he suggests Morello cherries as "fans," and red currants or gooseberries as "cordons." In the lawn he suggests a border or bed of oblique cordons 2 feet apart in the row, the "Belgian arch" of trees 3 feet apart in rows, dwarf pyramids 7 feet tall, or "pillar" trained apples and pears 12 feet tall.

Planned fruit gardens, including berry bushes as well as plum, apple and pear trees are described, follow-

ing the demonstration plots (45' x 60' and 45' x 30') of the East Malling Research Station. Other chapters deal with rootstocks and varieties, planting, staking, and pruning trees and bushes in each style of training. The book is well illustrated with photographs and drawings.

In a chapter on fertilizer, good physical condition of the soil is emphasized, with high nitrogen for brambles, other soft fruits and plums, and high potash for dessert apples, gooseberries and red currants. Various natural fertilizers with their chemical analyses are given. Grass clippings in a mowed lawn provide a natural mulch.

A simple method of summer pruning, a modification of the French method of Professor Lorette, is advocated for bush apple and pear trees. Every lateral or side shoot is pruned back to within $\frac{1}{8}$ inch of its base as soon as (but not unless) it is 7 or 8 inches long. This usually commences in June and continues all summer. Leaders or end growths are left unpruned until winter when they may be partially cut back for strength or to contain size. In England this method has tended to force stipulary buds into formation of fruit buds, and thus cause prolific fruiting.

Also described is the "pillar" method (especially adaptable to peach trees). A 12 foot long single stem like an upright cordon is built up. Then all 2 year laterals (shoots having born fruit) are cut out just before flowering in May. About 30 one year laterals from 12-15 inches long are allowed to remain.

It would be interesting to see if these methods would work here, as they would be useful means of simpli-

*A recent effort is a Brooklyn Botanical Garden Handbook, which will be reviewed in another issue of the F.V. & H.D.

fying the pruning of trees in restricted forms, a matter of great importance but difficult for most home gardeners to accomplish.

Another useful method described is the "arch" system of growing raspberries. The plants are spaced several feet apart. Then, instead of being pruned back, half of the full length canes are bent one way, and half the other and tied together in arches about 4 feet high. This permits full fruiting along the cane, easy picking and room for the new canes to grow straight up unhampered by the old. With black raspberries this method has proven highly successful here in southern Michigan. But heavy fertilizing is needed, as well as a wire support to prevent the "arches" from falling over with the weight of the enormous crop of berries produced.

Simple tools and spray equipment are discussed. Certain general principles of spraying are covered, with emphasis on the use of materials harmless to human beings and animals, an important factor for the amateur.

The balance of the book discusses the various types of fruits alphabetically, describing varieties and dealing with the cultural needs of the particular fruits. Although it might be assumed that English varieties would be of little value to American growers, I have not found this so, from the standpoint of the home gardener—where flavor may well be more important than a shiny red skin, and where green, yellow, and russet apples are soon discovered to have their own kind of beauty. The author favors Cox's Orange Pippin, St. Edmunds Pippin, Egremont Russet and Cornish Gilliflower, all of which have been delicious, high flavored apples, as grown here at South-meadow, in southeastern Michigan. He also recommends Wagener, an old American variety, because "anyone can grow

it" and it keeps all winter in ordinary storage. Merton Glory is described as the world's largest cherry; and Peregrine as the most delicious peach, which a friend tells me holds true for his rare tree of this variety in southern New York.

The neglect of gooseberry culture is lamented, and the decline of the giant gooseberry societies and their contests for producing berries 6 inches in circumference. He describes many of the old, large, sweet English varieties, such as Leveller, Howard's Lancer, Whitesmith, Langley's Gage, Lancashire Lad, Red Warrington and others, which are delicious, and easy to grow in America, if they can be found.

He also mentions the Bereczki quince as the best flavored, and with the unique property of being edible raw when fully ripe. He describes the solid red flesh of the Wealdon Ruby plum, the only such *domestica* I have ever heard of.

The author includes the "fertility rules," or pollination requirements which resulted from a study of pollination in English fruit varieties made by the John Innes Horticultural Institute, by which one can tell whether a variety needs another, and which one to use for cross pollination. For many plums, cherries, and pears, this may be useful to the American gardener interested in choice and special varieties. Picking dates are given for pear varieties, information desperately needed by the amateur.

All in all, Mr. Shewell-Cooper has produced a useful and interesting book for the home fruit gardener. It is to be hoped that someday there will be written a similarly much needed book for American fruit gardeners.

Robert A. Nitschke
Chairman, Fruit Gardens
Committee, A.P.S.