PLANTING AND PRUNING THE FARM ORCHARD

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There has been much argument for and against the farm orchard and there are good points on both sides of the question. It has received considerable attention in the institute work the last ten years or more. There are reasons to believe that the work has not been without good results but like all lines of farming, the advice and suggestions are soon forgotten.

The farm orchard, if properly handled, adds considerable profit and an untold amount of pleasure and satisfaction to its owner, besides adding considerable value to the farm. It should not be large—from one to two dozen trees is sufficient, and should be planted near the house for convenience. If the farm buildings are in an unfit location for trees then some more suitable place should be selected for the orchard or failure will result.

Low wet land is very undesirable—too much danger from late spring frosts and the drainage both for air and water will be poor.

In selecting varieties for the farm orchard I am sure to meet with criticism and difference of opinion and also in the problem of location, so I will give quite a wide list from which to choose in order to overcome these difficulties.

Thirty years ago on my old home farm in the valleys of Richland county we grew the finest Snow apples, it seems that I ever saw, but of course frost took two or three crops out of five, but we had lots of apples just the same nearly every year,—a few escaping the frosts as usual.

In the northern part of the state the lateness of the season influences to considerable extent the list of desirable varieties, while farther south the late maturing sorts will be much better.

For instance, the old Pewaukee in Richland and Sauk counties and in fact the whole south half of the state produces good sized and good colored fruit.

In the northern part of the state it is not desirable. Of course the tree is not iron clad anywhere in the state. I am only speaking of these varieties because we find lovers of the Snow and Pewaukee wondering why they cannot be grown.

The Snow can be grown most anywhere in the state and I believe I would head the list with it.

For the winter varieties, we will list the Snow, McIntosh, Talman, Windsor and Salome; for the summer and fall, we will list the Duchess, Dudley, Wealthy, Wolf River, Red Astrachan, St. Lawrence; and for the crabs, we will list Hyslop, Whitney and Virginia.

I have put in the Wolf River for baking, the Red Astrachan and Whitney for the children; Hyslop and Virginia for preserving, pickling, etc.; the others for general fall and winter use.

Planting trees on the farm is the job that most farmers do not understand and always slight. A farmer can plant corn and make it grow—potatoes and they grow and any other crop, but when he plants the trees—six times out of ten they will die. Usually there are good reasons why the trees die as a result of the planting process.
Sometimes, of course, the stock is poor and no amount of careful planting would make them live.

There are two ways of planting trees—one is with plenty of water and the other is without the use of water entirely. The mistake most farmers make is that when they pour water around the roots of the tree while planting they tramp the earth in. This should not be done. Throw the dirt in lightly then pour on the water and let the dirt settle firm in its own time and way.

When there is no water used, throw the dirt in and tramp firm, throwing a covering of loose dirt over the top. If tramping and water are used on the same tree it will be sure to die.

Planting is not all, nor is it the greatest essential to success in making the tree live. Pruning has an equal share in the life of a young tree.

The roots of all trees dug from the nursery are broken, bruised and cut while digging, leaving only a portion of the root system on the tree. The top has not been reduced at all so it seems only common sense to make at least a balanced condition between the top and roots by pruning the top to correspond with the pruned root system, thus reducing the bud surface to cut down the source of evaporation until the tree sends out new root growth.

So we say three-fourths of the top should be cut away—cutting off the limbs close to the body of the tree until there are only four or five branches left besides the leader or central branch; now shortening these remaining branches about two-thirds of their length or to about four or five buds.

When these rules are followed and the trees are cultivated and sprayed properly ninety-five per cent of them will live and make a good growth.

The next year the training should be continued and annually in the early spring the trees should be looked over and the defects remedied, building up a strong frame to hold the load it is sure to bear in the next few years.

Do not make the mistake of thinking that planting and pruning are all there is to keeping a farm orchard in good bearing condition. Cultivation and spraying are very great factors in the success of any orchard, no matter how small, and must be done thoroughly every year. But that is another subject and not to be discussed here.

THE FARM GARDEN

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A piece of land about twice as long as it is wide makes an ideal garden plot for the farm. If possible sow the rows the length of the garden about 24 to 36 inches apart, so as to be able to cultivate with a horse and fine tooth cultivator.

Mix a few radish seeds along with such seeds as onion, beet, carrot, parsnip and other slow germinating seeds as the radish seeds come up in 3 or 4 days, thus enabling cultivation to begin at once. By early and frequent cultivation, the ground is kept moist, the weeds checked and the slow germinating seeds given a fine opportu-