**Plympton Orchard 1907**

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THE FRUITGROWER.

In the Cumberland District.

NO. VII.

BY UNICORN.

PLYMPTON ORCHARD.

This fine holding of about 40 acres, 25 of which are planted, is situated on Murray Farm-road, Beecroft, and is the property of Mr. C. Churchill Tucker, J.P., a member of the well-known firm of Tucker and Company, wine and spirit merchants, of George-street, Sydney. Mr. Tucker also owns another block of 10 acres, known as Oaklands Orchard, off Kirkham-street, Beecroft. Of this, five acres are cultivated and the remainder forms the grounds of his fine modern residence, "Oaklands."

Plympton Orchard was first planted in 1886, when two acres were put under cultivation. It has been added to year by year, until it has reached the dimensions above stated. The orchard slopes to a creek, a tributary of Develin's Creek, which affords an excellent means of drainage, and those parts of it that are rather flat are drained by means of 2in agricultural drain pipes placed 3ft below the surface. Few, if any, orchards are worked so deeply. The land was first of all subdivided to a depth of 20in, and then from time to time ploughed with a heavy two-horse plough to a depth of 9 or 10 inches. This system, in Mr. Tucker's opinion, keeps the trees in better condition than shallow working does, by retaining the moisture in dry seasons and giving free play to the roots. About two-thirds of the area mentioned is occupied by citrus fruits, the remainder being devoted to Summer fruits, including apples, plums, peaches, apricots, pears, and persimmons.

ARTIFICIAL MANURES.

The orchard is well manured, but what Mr. Tucker considers of far more importance than manures is the replenishing of the orchard soil from time to time with fresh or virgin soil. This he has given special attention to, the fresh soil having obtained from a large catchment area in the creek and also from adjoining land, which he bought specially for the purpose.

"There are certain properties in the virgin soil," said he "which it is difficult for artificial manures to substitute. The fresh soil promises all that is necessary for the growth of the tree." In most orchards this method of treating worked or impoverished soil would not be practicable on account of the cost; but Mr. Tucker, whose commercial experience is of value, commends it to everyone who has any catchment area or vacant land at his disposal. It is more lasting, and where obtainable, cheaper than manure.

Plympton Orchard is generally regarded as being one of the best kept in the district, and Mr. Tucker has found it a paying concern, notwithstanding the large amount spent from year to year in planting out fresh land.

SUMMER FRUITS AND CITRUS FRUITS.

For a long time, he favoured summer fruit as against the citrus varieties, and his recent plantings being of the latter, it will take some time before they are in full bearing, so that the full benefit of the output will not be reached for some two or three years to come.

"Of citrus fruits in my experience,” said Mr. Tucker, "the lemon has been the most profitable, as it is a good cropper, yielding three or four crops in the year; but of late years importations of Italian lemons have considerably lessened the profits through competition."

CURING LEMONS.

Mr. Tucker was very emphatic oil the expediency of curing lemons. The main crop, which comes in the winter, should, he considers, be treated in this way, so as to be available for the summer trade, the summer crop generally being light. He has seen lemons kept for between five and six months, and has stored them for many months himself as an experiment. Owing, however, to the influx of Italian lemons, the inducement to put by for the summer time is considerably discounted.

MANDARINS AND ORANGES.

Mr. Tucker has also done particularly well out of mandarins, as the situation of his orchard appears to suit this variety, well. They have come close up to the lemons from a profit-making point of view. He has had, however, rather a woeful experience of the celebrated Washington navel orange, having found after the trees reached the bearing stage that they were very shy croppers. These, consequently, had to be headed back, and budded with other varieties.

He attributes the failure of the Washington navel at Plympton to the fact that the situation of the trees was on a slope, where the soil was too shallow. About half an acre of them were left on the orchard plot, where the soil was deeper, and he found that the trees, though not cropping so well as the common variety, did very much better than those on the hill.

Mr. Tucker has about three acres of the late Valencia oranges, which he has found a good paying variety, owing to its hanging properties. At the present time he has quite a large crop of this species, while the ordinary orange tree is devoid of fruit altogether. Some growers, he says, finds this orange inclined to run small in fruit, and this occurs in rather an unaccountable manner.

SUMMER FRUITS.

The position of the summer fruit trees on Plympton orchard is low-lying, and some of the varieties come in at a very opportune time for marketing, notably the Briggs Red May peach, which has proved one of the best paying in the orchard, maturing just before Christmas, and realising as much as 14s to 16s a case in some seasons.

A number of the later peaches have had to be re-budded with plums - Japanese plums doing exceptionally well on peach stocks. The orchard ls noted for producing the finest … Tibbett plum in the district. This variety is, in Mr. Tucker's experience, a great cropper, and a good shipper, though it is not one of the choicest for eating. He has a large number of Burbank's Wickson's plums planted out. These he has also found very profitable, though there ls a tendency among orchardists to overplant these varieties, and at no distant date the market may be expected to become glutted, the objections to the varieties named being that they are not the best for jam-making.

The Plympton apples have a good name in the market for colour and quality, and the

owner has done well out of this class of fruit. Among the varieties grown are the Carrington, and the Granny Smith; and Mr. Tucker has recently largely planted out the Jonathan apple, as an experiment, this fruit not having been thoroughly tested in the district, and it being a well-known shipping apple in Tasmania and Victoria. His experience is that the Granny Smith, owing to the long and tender stalks by which the fruit hangs, and its consequent inability to resist wind, as other varieties, should be sheltered where possible. "With accommodation for storing, the keeping properties of this variety," said Mr. Tucker, "are so good that there is no reason why this apple should not be put by for from five to six months.

The Williams' Bon Cretien ls the only variety of pear grown at Plumpton, and Mr. Tucker has found it very subject to black spot. Unless carefully sprayed, he would not advise others

to plant it out, except in sandy soils, and high situations.

Apricots have proved the most unsatisfactory fruit that Mr. Tucker has handled. The Camdens, which he planted largely, had to be cut down, owing to the situation being too low. These, Mr. Tucker finds, must be planted on fairly high ground. He has been very successful, however, with his late apricots, the situation for these being good.

FRUIT PESTS.

Speaking of fruit pests, Mr. Tucker said: "The diseases I have been troubled with most

so far as citrus fruits are concerned have been the red scale, white louse, and the Indian wax scale. This last-named has only recently made its appearance, and has not done the same amount of damage to the trees as the others. The treatment for all of the above diseases I have found most efficacious is spraying with a solution known as Telemulsion in a mixture of kerosene and soft soap in about 1gal of kerosene to 30gal of water and about 7lb of soft soap. For fungus diseases I use the Bordeaux mixture, and have found it to act well. I also use the Bordeaux mixture for summer fruit diseases such as shot hole, fungus in apricots, and black spot on pears and apples.

"For the codlin moth I believe in bandaging the trees and spraying with Paris green. Owing no doubt to the dry seasons experienced for -the past decade, there ls a remarkable absence of woolly aphis, but spraying with Telemulsion is the best remedy I know of for that pest. As to the fruit fly, we can only hope by the careful picking up and burning of fruit affected by the fly - both citrus and summer fruits - to eradicate this pest. I did try netting a few choice peach-trees as a protection against the fly and had wonderfully successful results, the fruit coming to maturity and showing no signs of the fly. I had the whole tree enveloped in cheese cloth, and the slight shading improved the colouring of the fruit greatly."

Mr. Tucker has been a successful exhibitor at various fruit shows. At the last Castle Hill Show ho was first in with Burbank and Blood Plums In two of the largest classes for plums ever exhibited, besides being among the winners in other sections.