

FRUIT AND VEGETABLES



By Mr. B. F. Walton, Yuba City

Mr. Walton, who is widely known in California, is a practical farmer and fruit grower, and has been identified with the fruit business almost since its inception in California.

The Sacramento Valley is especially adapted to the growing of fruits and vegetables, because of favorable qualities of soil and climate for practically all orchard and garden crops and for the further reason that the almost continuous growing season enables the grower to secure practically constant use of his land, thereby multiplying his yearly product from two to three fold.

This valley produces a very large part of the deciduous fruit and grape crop of the State. The bulk of the fruits shipped from California to Eastern markets in the fresh state is grown within fifty miles of the of Sacramento. The records of the California Fruit Distributors, which handles more than ninety per cent of the fruit shipped from the State, shows that from eighty to eighty-five per cent of the year's shipments are from this territory.

Fruits of all kinds are grown in practically all portions of the valley. There are no separate districts. Peaches, pears, plums, apricots, figs, oranges, lemons, olives and all varieties of grapes grow side by side in every valley county. The same is true of vegetables. The reclaimed lands along the lower Sacramento may be termed vegetable districts because of the large areas devoted to beans, asparagus, potatoes, melons and other similar crops, but these and other products are grown with the same excellent results throughout the Sacramento Valley.



FRUIT and vegetables are the leading home building products of California. They are essentially the products of "the little farm well tilled." Home building is the highest calling of mankind. Independent farm homes are the bulwark of the institutions of this country. The profitable nature of these intensive farm crops in this valley render it peculiarly adapted to the building of such homes, and the settle-

ment of this valley by thrifty American farmers will have an important bearing on the solution of the farm life problem because the advantages of farm life here will operate to check the tendency of the people to flock to towns and cities. These farm homes may be supplied with all the comforts and most of the luxuries of modern life. This valley is destined to be thickly populated, with interurban electric lines, good roads, and the companionship that comes of close neighbors, these are already a part of some of the leading orchard districts.



PRACTICAL fruit-growing is essentially a small farm proposition. In the early days of fruit culture in this State it was regarded largely as a speculative enterprise and orchards of great extent were planted by capitalists and large land-owners. Developments have proven that wholesale methods are as a rule unsuited to fruit-growing, because of the large labor expense and difficulties of management. The best and most productive orchards are those ranging from five or six to twenty acres. On orchards of this kind the owner is enabled to supervise practically every detail of cultivation, gathering, curing and shipping. Many of the small growers plant their fruit crops to mature a few acres at a time, thereby enabling a small force to care for a large crop. Fruit is handled in three principal ways—by drying, by delivery to the canneries and by shipment in the fresh state. Three separate channels of distribution are thus afforded of which a grower may in the case of most crops, avail himself.

California sunshine is a very important asset in fruit production, adding constantly to the food value as long as the fruit is exposed either on the trees or in the drying yard. Fruit for drying is spread on trays and exposed to the sun's rays. The methods employed are very simple and the results are most satisfactory. Dried fruit is one of the best productions of the orchards of the State. The fruits principally dried



are prunes, raisins, peaches, apricots, figs, pears and plums.

The Sacramento Valley is a large producer of almonds and other nuts. English walnuts are being planted quite extensively at this time, a large portion of the almond crop of the State is grown here.

There are several large fruit and vegetable canneries in the Sacramento Valley, the principal plants being at Marysville, Yuba City, Chico, Gridley, Corning, Colusa, Woodland, Sacramento, and at several points on the lower Sacramento River. Canneries demand the very best of fruit and vegetables and this has done much to stimulate the development of better varieties and better cultural methods. Peaches, for instance, have practically doubled in size owing to the demand of canneries for large fruit. The canneries pay, as a rule, good prices which stimulates growers to produce the best.

The fresh fruits are shipped all over the United States. The shipment of fruit and grapes in the fresh state last year aggregated 12,920 carloads. Shipments this year will exceed this by probably 1500 cars. The shippers have an excellent system of handling this fruit. The California Fruit Distributors, an organization of the leading shipping firms, handling a very large per cent of the business, controls the routing of the cars, insuring an even distribution of the fruit among the various Eastern markets.

Oranges and a portion of the deciduous fruits are shipped through the California Fruit Exchange, a branch of the most successful co-operative growers marketing agency in this country. Olives are pickled or made into oil. There are several olive oil mills and pickling plants in the Sacramento Valley.



Fruit growing on small holdings is almost uniformly successful and profitable. The gross returns from an acre of fruit of almost any kind will range from one hundred dollars an acre upward, sometimes running as high as five hundred dollars an acre. The expense of growing the crops is small and where the grower and his family perform the bulk of the work, the greater portion of this is profit.

Fruit-growing has an advantage above that secured from the mere money value of the crops; while simple and easily learned, it offers a big reward for superior skill and industry. Fruit-growing stimulates the best there is in men; it begets observation, regularity and application, which are all essential to human development. The brightest boys and girls in California come from the fruit, dairy and vegetable farms.

The vegetable crops are marketed in various places. Beans, of which fifty thousand acres are grown annually in this valley, are sold in the markets of the world. Potatoes, melons and fresh vegetables of all kinds are marketed chiefly at Sacramento, San Francisco, Los Angeles and Portland.

This valley leads all sections of this country in the production of asparagus. There are several canneries which handle this vegetable only, and it is also packed in most of the fruit canneries. Thousands of acres are devoted to this crop. Cutting begins in February and continues without intermission until July. Large crops are harvested. The product is in demand and its superior quality is the best promise of its future.



HOGS and chickens and cows are a valuable adjunct to every orchard. The beginner often makes his poultry yard, cows and pigs support him while his orchard or vineyard is coming into bearing.

The fruit industry affords employment for thousands of men, women and children. The fruit canneries and packing establishments advertise for women and children during the busy seasons. The work is adapted to both sexes and all ages. Mere girls become experts and earn as high as two or three dollars a day, sometimes more.

While the area devoted to fruit is extended yearly, there is little danger of over-production, for with a better knowledge of dietary requirements the people of this country are using constantly more fruit and fruit products. Fruit is a food, a necessity, not a luxury, and its more extensive use is dictated by an increasing knowledge of this fact, by a popular taste and by relatively higher prices of other foods.