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HORTICULTURAL DEPARTMENT, EXPERIMENT STATION,
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Picking and Packing Apples.

Numerous inquiries are reaching the Horticultural Department of the Kansas Experiment Station in regard to the prospects of the apple crop, the probable price and possibilities of storage. From observations in many parts of the State the writer believes that the estimate of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, 78 per cent, is conservative. In regard to prices, one man's guess may be as good as another's, but there seems to be no doubt among shippers and dealers that good fruit will bring fair prices. The market for culls and windfalls in localities where neither evaporators or cider mills are established is always poor when fruit is plentiful. Many growers do not sort fruit closely, and this improper sorting is a cause of frequent loss. Many times a barrel or box that contains two-thirds number one fruit and one-third number two is rated as number two; in fact, that is the usual custom— to rate fruit as low as the poorest part of the package and the dealer is justified, for the one-third may damage the entire lot if stored for any length of time.

A form of contract that has been in use in recent years specifies the minimum diameter for the variety and the other conditions the same for all sorts. For example, "Number one Winesaps must be not less than two and one-quarter inches in diameter, well colored for the variety, free from all blemishes, fungous, and insect injury." This a high standard, of course, but fruit that can make this grade, can be depended upon to make a profit. Close culling is necessary and when fruit is culled so closely the second grade is frequently suitable for storing. Some buyers will accept as second fruit that which has an "end worm," others insist upon freedom from insect injury. There has been some quibbling as to what constitutes "insect injury," some buyers holding that even the slightest mark or sting is a blemish, but most packers are satisfied if the fruit is "serviceably sound," that if the sting has only marked or slightly discolored the skin, the fruit is eligible to first class.

Fruit for storage should be picked while yet firm, as fruit that has advanced to a stage of ripeness to be best for eating will almost invariably "break down," and even if it looks well when taken out, will be decayed at the core. Some growers of high quality fruit pick their orchards more than once, gathering the fruit as soon as it is well colored, leaving the poorly colored and immature fruits until they have become well colored. Unless this is done some fruit will fail to grade number one for this cause, but each grower must decide whether or not such a course will pay.

The best storage is that in which the temperature may be absolutely controlled by means of refrigerating machinery. A temperature which varies but a degree or two from 32 is best. The price of storage varies with supply and demand, but from ten to twenty cents per bushel has been the range of prices. Where fruit is kept in common fruit cellars great care must be taken to keep the temperature as cool as possible, never allowing air which is warmer than the fruit to come in contact with it. Fruit and store-room should be cool as possible when storing and the temperature carefully watched. Good ventilation, that may be absolutely controlled, is a necessity.

The packing of fruit is a great factor in successful marketing. Fancy fruit is being largely packed in the bushel box and fruit packed in layers, fruit all faced one way, makes the most approved package. For this work the fruit must be uniform in size, and the color as nearly one shade as possible. The cost of the package per bushel does not vary largely, but boxes store more economically than do barrels. A barrel or a box is "faced" for two reasons: to allow the cover to be more easily and securely fixed, and to make the fruit appear attractive when the package is opened. But every apple in the package should be of good honest quality for its grade. The best growers affix their names and the date of packing and the number of their packer to each package. Some attach a guarantee, others a request for information if the fruit is not satisfactory in every way. Every package of fruit should be a silent salesman. It must be "up to grade" if the reputation of the grower is maintained. The grower who grows a high quality of fruit, packs it right and stores it well, has the choice of markets and in years of heavy crops usually has least complaint of poor prices.

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