



A cluster of Dorsett berries

Eastern Shore Growers Find New Berries Profitable

By W. LEE ALLEN

THE 1935 strawberry crop was one of the most profitable Eastern Shore growers have had for several years. Various factors contributed to this result. There is little question but that the drought of 1934 reduced the total acreage in some of the middle western states and that higher market prices resulted. Weather conditions for producing a good crop on the Eastern Shore were very favorable. Furthermore, many growers have made use of new and better varieties and received better prices because of having better berries.

Many of the middle western states were adversely affected by the 1934 drought. Probably the berry crops of Kentucky, Tennessee and Missouri are the ones which had the most influence on markets for Eastern Shore berries. The limited acreage and the decreased production in those states resulted in far less mid-western berries being shipped to the eastern markets than usual.

Where strawberries are grown on reasonably good land and are well fertilized, the main limiting factor in production is moisture. The fruiting season in 1935, starting with the period when strawberries were in bloom, was one of the most favorable in years from the standpoint of moisture. Frequent showers throughout the period when the plants were in bloom and the fruit was developing made possible a large average size and total production per acre.

At times there seemed to be even too much rainfall which is likely to make the berries rot, especially where plants in the fruiting row are overcrowded. It also makes the berries gritty and detracts from their appearance and value. The practices of keeping plants thinned to prevent excessive rotting and of mulching to reduce the percentage of dirty berries after a shower are recommended. They will be helpful in wet seasons and in dry seasons they will aid in conserving moisture.

A discussion of varieties always brings out plenty of argument and personal opinion. Prior to 1915 perhaps 80% or more of the early strawberries grown on the Eastern Shore were Missionary and Klondyke with the exception of a few Horsey and Heflin produced in the two Virginia counties. Premier was introduced in 1915. On account of its great productivity Premier rapidly gained favor with the Eastern

Shore growers, displacing a large percentage of the Klondyke and Missionary. After a few years Premier became very unpopular with those who shipped in refrigerator cars. Where shipments were made by truck Premier was not discounted so heavily. As Premier came to be planted in large acreages the great productivity of the plants resulted in a tremendous quantity of these berries going on the market in a short time. The poor prices for Premier berries resulted from such heavy shipments of mediocre berries have a lot to do with the ready acceptance which some of the new varieties have had among Eastern Shore growers.

The first and most popular of these new early berries was the Blakemore. Probably it is safe to say that no variety ever took hold faster than Blakemore has on the Eastern Shore, largely on account of its vigor of plant growth, productivity and especially the light color and firmness of the berries. It is unfortunate that much of the early stock of Blakemore on the Peninsula came from stock which was slightly to badly infested with bud nematode or crimps which is a very serious problem in some of the southern states. There are stocks of this variety which have not been exposed to this disease and many of the larger growers are securing their new plants from these sources.

Another fault of Blakemore is Yellows. In all Blakemore fields areas are found where the leaves turn quite yellow. In some cases it is serious enough to reduce the crop. Scientists have not yet decided whether or not this trouble will eventually destroy the usefulness of this fine variety.

Bellmar is another variety with the same parentage as Blakemore, but is even darker than Premier in color. Bellmar, although a fine variety, has not taken hold much in Eastern Shore berry growing sections.

Still newer are Dorsett and Fairfax which have been grown for several years, but in 1935 were put on the market in considerable quantities. These berries are both good shippers, Fairfax being

slightly more firm and Dorsett slightly less firm than Blakemore. In size also they are better than other early varieties. In quality Dorsett and Fairfax are far superior to any varieties yet grown in this section, and it is felt that this



A quart basket of Fairfax berries



Cull Piles Show Pruning is Needed For Water Supply

Observation of the cull piles of several packing houses both in Virginia and Maryland, last fall, showed a great number of culls due to limb rub and mechanical bruises. In some cases there were more culls from these causes than from insects.

This would indicate that growers should give attention to removal of small twigs and branches throughout the tree in order to eliminate the causes of rubbed and battered fruit.

It is always a safe rule in thinking of pruning requirements to look over the trees with the last harvest season in mind, particularly the number of culls and off-grade fruits.

By reducing the amount of small and poorly colored fruit, proper pruning will make money for the grower. It will also open the trees to better sunlight and to better spray coverage.

A good guide in making pruning a profitable operation is: (1) Cut out as little of the strong, fruiting wood as possible. (2) Remove the weak wood. (3) Cut under instead of on top.

As trees are pruned this winter, growers will do well to be on the look-out for red mite. Several serious outbreaks of this insect last summer did considerable damage to leaves and fruit by causing poor color and early fruit dropping. They weakened buds for next year.

Miscible oil spray applied in the spring will control this insect, but the entomologists warn that the oil spray must not be applied too early or it will not give proper results, as the eggs have hard shells until near hatching time.

high quality together with their other good points will make Dorsett and Fairfax rival Blakemore in total acreage as they become better known.

John Hicks, a grower in Somerset County, Md., reported a yield of 8,000 quarts per acre of Dorsett, in fact from just 5,000 plants set. Many other fine yields were obtained from both Dorsett and Fairfax. Equally important is the selling price. Government reports show out the season from this section until some of the later berries began to come in.

Among the late varieties there has been no such rapid change in popular favor. Big Joe for midseason and Chesapeake, Lupton and Gandy for late have been favorites for a long time. Only one variety now on the horizon seems capable of displacing these to any extent. That variety is Catskill.

Of the new varieties mentioned, Blakemore, Bellmar, Dorsett and Fairfax are introductions of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Catskill was introduced by the New York Agricultural Experiment Station.

The relation of cover crops to water conservation in orchards is emphasized in a report made by T. B. Hutcheson of the Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station. He points out that more than 400 pounds of water must pass through the leaves of plants in order that one pound of dry matter may be produced.

"When one considers," Mr. Hutcheson says, "the enormous yield of dry material in leaves, new growth and fruit, and further considers the fact that the unpreventable loss of water by run-off and percolation amounts to at least fifty per cent of the total rainfall it is easy to grasp the fact that on the average the amount of water falling on orchards during the growing season is insufficient to produce large yields of fruit."

The solution to the problem is to store water in the soil between growing seasons. Aside from irrigation, Mr. Hutcheson points to two ways to increase moisture in the orchard soil: (1) Prevent run-off by using cover crops and cultivation, and (2) increase the organic matter of orchard soil. (Organic matter may hold from 200 to 300 per cent of its weight in water.)

Cover crops supply organic matter. Legumes are preferable since, when properly inoculated, they have the power of gathering from the atmosphere nitrogen which may later be used by the trees. Biennial clovers, cowpeas or soybeans, and annual lespedezas are the three best cover crops.

Sweet clover, seeded in late winter, sends its roots deeper in the soil and gives a larger yield of organic matter than does red clover. However, this crop will not grow in acid soils and requires liberal applications of phosphates for maximum production.

Cowpeas and soybeans are summer legumes which furnish lots of organic matter and are well suited for young orchards. Seed cowpeas in June, soybeans in May. Superphosphate will increase the yield. A bad aspect of these crops is that they require plowing of the land which always increases erosion.

Annual lespedezas grow on acid soils and require little plant food. Seed are sown in March without soil preparation. They are simply broadcast, 25 pounds to the acre, harrowed lightly.

FARM FACTS

More homes should be painted in 1936. Paint spells beauty and economy.

Food, feed, and fertility first. When the farmer does this he is on the right road to better things.

Permanent prosperity is within the reach of only the farmer who follows good farm practices.