The Home Fruit Garden, Varieties for the Different Sections, their Planting and Care

W. L. Floyd, College of Agriculture, Gainesville, Florida.

With the development of the State now taking place, the increase in production, the consequent increase in wealth, the larger proportion of residents who spend the year round here, and their desire to live economically, healthfully and contentedly it seems a fitting time to discuss the growing of fruits for home consumption.

Florida extends through so great a range of latitude, that it is not possible to suggest fruits adapted to the whole area, therefore the following divisions are made in order that more definite and satisfactory recommendations may be made.

Northwest section embracing all of western and northern Florida to the Suwannee river.

Northeast section extending from the Suwannee river eastward and southward to the southern boundaries of Levy, Marion, Putnam and St. John’s counties.

South-central section, counties south of the above to the northern boundaries of Palm Beach and Lee counties.

South section, the counties of Palm Beach, Broward, Dade, Lee and Monroe.

In the northwestern section, the deciduous fruits should be given a prominent place. These may include the apple, peach, plum, pear, pecan, persimmon, fig, grape and pomegranate. The apple does better here than in the other sections, but not well enough even here to justify planting more than a few trees of such varieties as Jennings, Early Harvest and Red June. Peaches should be given a prominent place, such varieties as Carmen, Sneed and Glen, with perhaps a tree or two of Jewel for very early fruiting.

Most of the varieties of plum, pear, persimmon, fig and pomegranate listed by the nurserymen of the State will do well here so there is abundant opportunity for choice in selecting. The Curtis pecan gives most general satisfaction, though it bears a nut not so large as the Frotscher, Stuart and Van Deman, which, however, are not so sure of producing regularly a good crop. Of the bunch grapes, the Delaware, Diamond and Niagara will probably prove most satisfactory, and any of the muscadine varieties.

In the northeast section leaving out apples, but bringing in the Satsuma orange, kumquats, and Duncan grapefruit and the loquat, changing the varieties of peaches to derivatives of the Honey and Peento such as Imperial, Jewel, Taber and Waldo, planting only the Celestial
and Brown Turkey fig, Excelsior, Terrell
and McRea plum, other kinds and varie-
ties as recommended for the northwest
section would prove satisfactory.
In the south-central section more atten-
tion should be given to the evergreens,
every desired variety of the different
groups of citrus, especially such choice
ones not much grown commercially as,
Ruby Blood, and King oranges, and Villa
Franca lemons. The guava should have
a place here also. Of the deciduous, the
Jewel, Miami and Red Ceylon peach, the
Excelsior plum, and muscadine grape are
desirable.
In the southern section, any desired va-
riety of citrus and such tender sub-trop-
icals as guava, mango, avocado, papaya,
tamarind, sapodilla and the annonas.
As to the size of this fruit garden, I will
discuss how small rather than how large
it may be. Where only a back yard area
is available, perhaps only 40 by 50 feet,
I urge that varieties be selected judicious-
ly and planted in such an area. Trees
may be headed back and kept smaller than
standard for several years; by planting
close to fences, and boundary lines, plac-
ing those that will do well in partially
shaded places near to houses, walls and
shade trees, more may be placed than one
imagines at first.
Figs do well close to a house or with
their roots running under a wood pile. Pecans, pears, loquats and tamarinds may
be placed where shade is desired instead
of the much used oak and china, thus se-
curing both beauty and utility. In a re-
region where the pecan grows particularly
well, I observed a few days ago in passing
of attack and the way the remedy acts, and apply the mixture with good judgment, at proper time and in a thorough manner.

All diseases and dead branches should be pruned out when discovered, and careful systematic pruning done, mainly during December or January, to shape the trees in attractive form and make them produce more bearing wood. It is wonderful how one can shape a tree to his will if he begins early and does it regularly with thought and care.

Chickens are desirable in the fruit garden, as they catch many of the insect pests, enjoy the shade and refuse fruit, enrich the soil by their droppings and help cultivate by their scratching. Root knot, which attacks a number of our fruit trees, may be kept down in part by the efforts of a flock of chickens under the trees.

In 1917 the University of Missouri Extension Department made an estimate of the yield and value of the fruit produced in ten orchards in ten different counties of the State. It was found that the cash value after deducting cost of production, averaged $261.21 per acre. It is possible to make this home fruit garden the most productive area on the place.

If one does not understand methods of propagation the most satisfactory way to get the trees desired is to purchase them from a reliable near-by nursery, the varieties obtained will thus be adapted to the locality. It adds much interest to propagate at least a part of one’s trees, and there are bulletins and books easily obtainable, which will make comparatively plain the methods to be followed. A few desirable U. S. D. A. Farmers’ Bulletins are:

FARMERS’ BULLETINS U. S. D. A.

157—Propagation of Plants.
181—Pruning.
440—Spraying Peaches.
471—Grape Propagation, Pruning and Spraying.
482—Pear and How to Grow It.
631—Growing Peaches, Sites, Propagation, Etc.
632—Growing Peaches, Pruning, Etc.
633—Growing Peaches, Variety and Classification.
685—The Native Persimmon.
700—Pecan Culture.
709—Muscadine Grapes.
852—Home Canning of Fruit and Vegetables.
859—Home Preservation of Muscadine Grapes.
871—Fresh Fruit and Vegetables as Conservers of other Foods.

These may be obtained free from Secretary of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

Some helpful books are:

5. Citrus Fruits and Their Culture, by Hume.

The list of available bulletins of the Florida Experiment Station should also be secured and all desirable ones asked for.

There is no expenditure of money and efforts that pay more handsome dividends in the way of health, comfort and profit about the home than a well selected and properly cared for home fruit garden.