

Report of Standing Committee on Grapes, Figs and Kaki.

BY B. M. HAMPTON.

*Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Fellow Members of the State Horticultural Society of Florida:*

For some reason beyond my ken, I have been appointed as chairman of the standing committee on grapes, figs and kaki. While I have had some experience with all of these fruits, I do not want you to think for one moment, that I consider myself as expert authority on any of them; but I suppose you expect something said on the subject, and so I will try and add my mite.

The grape and the fig, as you all know, are among the oldest fruits of which history gives us any record. "Under your own vine and fig tree," is as old as time itself. The vine especially is almost world-wide. Take, for instance, our own country. You will find it flourishing on the bleak and rocky hills of New England, and 'mid the sunny glades of Florida, as well as on the coral rocks of her thousand keys or islands. One of the most valuable fruits known to man is the grape, and no home, however humble, should be without its vine or more of the healthful grape.

Starting from the shores of the Caspian Sea, you will find it flourishing in many lands and under many conditions of soil and climate. As I have already told you, it grows from New England to the

southern extremity of the United States with more or less profit; but up to the present time with less profit in Florida than in most other sections where it flourishes. And as I said before, everyone should have a vine or two at least, for their own use. When you have a near-by market, other things being equal, you can grow them with profit in Florida; but as a bread-winner to be shipped to a distant market, I do not think it has proven a success.

I have known a number of vineyards to be planted in Florida, but for some reason they are soon dug up or abandoned altogether, thus intimating that commercially speaking, they were not a success. I myself planted about two acres some ten years ago. All went well until I came to sell them. For some reason the fabulous prices so often noted in the papers of Florida, did not pan out.

I planted a number of kinds of the *Labrusca* species or common grape grown in the North for wine or the table mostly—all seemed to do well—also quite a number of different kinds of the *Vinifera* or raisin grape. Of the former species, the White Niagara seemed to get the closest to filling the bill; thrifty, prolific and a good quality, it is one of the most satisfactory grapes for Florida. Like the old speckled hen, it will give good returns with lots of neglect. Then the *Vinifera*

species or raisin grapes that are so extensively grown on the western coast, in California, for wine and raisins, whilst I have given them, that is, most of those grown on a large scale there, and some that are not, a trial, I have never found any that gave much promise of profit; though you can grow a few for home use, and they are quite enticing for the novice to experiment with. You see glowing accounts in the papers of this one or that one having phenomenal success with these choice varieties and promising to revolutionize grape culture in Florida. You hear the report quite distinctly, but listen in vain for the echo.

There are two kinds of the *Vinifera* varieties that seem to be worthy of more extensive notice and also a trial. The one that I am acquainted with is the one known as the St. Augustine grape. It is thin of skin and of a good flavor, quite thrifty and prolific, ripening in July, bunches are large, berries resembling the Catawba; but the bunches are not so compact. It thrives in and around St. Augustine, and is supposed to have been brought from Maderia by the Spanish in the early settlement of the place. It seems to flourish and fruit with as little care as the Scuppernong, but ripening so much earlier than the Scuppernong helps to extend the season for this fruit. Then at St. Augustine they have a blackish-purple grape, pretty much the same as the above, and of the same family, but having larger berries and ripening when the other is about gone. It is quite prolific. Both of them are supposed to come from Spain. I traced their ancestry back for about one hundred years, and then it seemed to end; but all agree that it was brought from Spain with the earliest settlement of St. Augustine.

There is still another grape, said to grow on the Keys in and around Key West. I wrote to the board of trade of Key West about the grape, but failed to get any definite information.

From all I could learn, the grape is of the *Vinifera* species, and without a doubt came from Spain, though some say England; but this I doubt. The vine is said to be quite a thrifty grower and quite a prolific bearer. The grape is as large or larger than the Niagara. The fruit itself is reported to resemble the famed Malaga, in color a reddish-purple, bunches large, said to weigh from five to seven pounds. Indeed, I have been told some of them have been known to weigh as much as twenty pounds; but I would advise taking quite a liberal pinch of salt with the statement about the size and weight of these bunches. In fact, it would be well, perhaps, to take a grain or so with the whole story. Mr. E. V. Blackman is the only one I have ever met that claims to have seen the grape, and he says he has seen the bunches that would weigh from five to twelve pounds each. Some years ago I had a talk with James Mott about this grape. He took a trip to the Keys particularly to find this grape, and if I remember rightly, failed to do so. The vine is said to be quite tender, but in time this might be overcome. I think perhaps Mr. E. V. Blackman could give us some definite information, he being so close to where it is said to grow. I think it well worth further investigation than I have been able to give it.

Now as to the fig. This is another fruit, if you will allow me to call it a fruit; for really it is not a true fruit. That which we call fruit being the fleshy receptacle, of a conical form attached to the branch by the narrow end, the broad end

or apex having a small opening. This expands somewhat, as the true flowers open, and the seeds mature within this fleshy receptacle.

Be it flower or fruit, it is of great value to man wherever the climate will permit of its growth—one of the most wholesome and nourishing of the long list of fruits given to man, either fresh, canned or dried. I believe several kinds could be grown profitable in Florida, both for home use and for canning and preserving. I have grown various kinds with more or less success for the last twelve or fifteen years on high pine land. I find the White Marseilles, Brown Turkey, and the Brunswick among the best for home use in Florida. By having these three you will always have figs in their season; but if you have a choice spot of ground, rich and moist; not wet, and feel willing to give the tree a little extra care, then plant a White Adriatic, and it will abundantly pay you for all of your trouble; but it must have moisture and plenty of fertilizer in some form. Plenty of good cow-pen manure is about as good as anything. Then you can supplement this with some good commercial fertilizer.

The fig, like the grape, will grow readily from cuttings taken at any time when the tree is dormant and has shed its leaves. November or December, I have found about the best time to clip the cuttings. Either plant these at once or bury them until the beginning of February, then plant in good, rich soil, just leaving one or two buds above the ground and keep the ground moist until well-rooted—not wet, mind.

In writing these few lines on figs, I have taken it for granted that all of you know about them, their culture and use. I will just add that all of the kinds I have mentioned are good for all home purposes

or for canning, preserving or drying. I have made fine dried figs out of each kind; but I prefer the White Adriatic. I have had this fig to cure right on the tree. It is larger than the others when properly grown, and to my way of thinking, much better. It is greenish-white in color and has a thin, but exceedingly tough skin, with a rich crimson sweet pulp, a fine flavor, and is especially sweet—well worth the extra care you have given it. Every home in Florida should have at least a few trees for home use.

Now a few words on the Kaki or Japanese Persimmon, and I am done. This fruit, I think, will in time be of more profit to Florida commercially speaking than either of the others. But in the first place, one should give them names, good English names, that all can pronounce without giving them the lockjaw. There is much in an attractive name. Give a fruit a pretty sounding name, and the battle is about half won. This fruit is just in its infancy in this country; so that we have much to learn as to what varieties to grow and culture of same. Some say to give thorough culture; others tell you just to fertilize and let alone. I have known them to do well under both culture and non-culture. I planted quite a grove of this fruit some years ago and gave it clean culture. The trees grew nicely, but I sold the grove before they came into bearing, and now I have but a few trees just coming into bearing. These are on high pine land, with the usual grayish top-soil, yellowish or reddish sub-soil, underlaid with red clay, at Lakemont, Polk county, Florida.

In some sections of Florida, particularly where I speak of, the Japanese persimmon, so far as I know, has been a shy bearer. I have tried a number of years to get the Tannenashi to fruit, but to no purpose; so finally I dug it up. This is a fine fruit

—one of the best, and in many places fruits abundantly. It is a very large fruit, conical in shape, skin reddish-yellow, with few seeds—many fruit none at all—and a good shipper when not allowed to get too ripe before shipping. This variety is very attractive to the eye and as good as it is attractive; but for some reason I could never get it to fruit to amount to anything, though the wild persimmon fruited in abundance all around me; but because the Tannenashi would not fruit for me, I did not give it up, for some had trees in bearing of other varieties, but all had a good many seeds and all were of medium size—good to be sure—but not extra. But, at last in an obscure corner, I noticed a tree that bore full crops every year. The fruit was large, tomato-shaped and of the deepest red in color, covered with a rich bloom like a plum, seedless and less astringent than most varieties, and was of a finer, richer flavor than any fruit of the kind I had ever eaten, and I think that I have sampled all of the choice varieties around St. Augustine, the home of this fruit; for at this place they all seem to fruit without any trouble. I further noticed when a bud was taken from this particular tree, which for want of a better name, I shall call “Hampton’s Choice,” simply to designate it from others (I have tried in most of the catalogues to locate this variety, but so far have failed,) and budded on a Tannenashi that refused to hold its fruit, that branch would be full of fruit while the rest of the tree would have but few or none. It will thus appear that the “Hampton’s Choice” was immune to that which caused the Tannenashi to drop its fruit.

On the high, sandy land at Lakemont, as yet I have but two or three trees in bearing. They were grafted on the wild, small stock three years ago the past season

and bore full crops of fruit last season and this; however, the trees are but from four to six feet high and had but little care. I have been away from my grove most of the time for the past two years I have gathered this fruit when fully colored and kept it in the house for even four weeks, and at the end of that time it was sound and as fine in quality as a persimmon ever gets. The past fall of 1905 I gathered among others, one fruit that was quite hard and only partly colored. This was early in November, and this fruit was kept until Christmas without showing any signs of decay. Then it was in good condition to eat and was good as one could ask it to be, thus proving its keeping and shipping qualities. The fruit is large, from two to three inches in diameter and of the deepest red and entirely seedless, never having found a single seed in a fruit. Yet I do not know of any persimmon so highly colored that can be eaten when as solid as a good, ripe apple, and then lacking in the astringent qualities that other persimmons would have at that stage of ripeness.

While this persimmon may have been grown by some for years, certainly I have never been able to locate it among others on the fruit stands in Florida. I sometimes think, however, it is simply the section it is grown in that makes it appear different from some of the listed varieties. But one thing is sure, it is the persimmon par excellence for the high, pine land, and the one of all others I could plant on such land for profit or home use.

DISCUSSION.

Mr. Griffing.—I would like to hear from Mr. Macklin who has had some experience in growing persimmons.

Mr. Macklin.—As I read a paper before

this society last year on this subject I did not expect to say anything at this meeting. Nevertheless there are a few remarks I would like to make.

I most heartily endorse the remarks of Mr. Hampton, in the paper just read, on the use of the word "kaki." We do not call an orange a peach, or a pineapple by its botanical name and I see no reason why we should do so with the persimmon. We have a good English name for the fruit so why not use it. I would very much like to see that the word "kaki" discontinued in the reports of this society. I have been at considerable pains for several years past to introduce this fruit into northern markets as the Japanese persimmon and if I have to begin all over again with "kaki" I shall despair of success.

Up till this season I was under the impression that the persimmon was so late blooming as to be immune from frost but this spring a frost on March 21st damaged the crop considerably.

As regards markets, some places will have them while others will not. In New York they sell fairly well, yet Boston which is only a short distance away, will not give a paying price for them. It looks as though the Bostonians were too conservative and would not eat anything that is new. Since reading a paper on persimmons here last year my orchard of the Haycheya variety shows signs of increasing its crop with the increased age of the trees.

Mr. Griffing.—Is the Yemon variety holding its fruit as well as the others.

Mr. Macklin.—I have only three varieties in commercial quantities, the Haykume, Tannenashi, and Haycheya, the Tannenashi I find to be the best.

Mr. Henderson.—We can have the persimmon so long that I think there are few fruits better. We can have them from the first of August until March. I have only six varieties. The Tannenashi is the best I have. They are of a large beautiful shape and carry well, better than any I have. I kept some of them until after Christmas and they were perfect. I think we should have more Japanese persimmons and grapes.

Mr. Griffing.—I would call attention to the fact that we may use the persimmon to good advantage in diversifying our products. The Japanese persimmon is the very best food for hogs. There is one variety the Zengi that ripens and commences dropping in August and continues until December. Hogs are very fond of these and will fatten on them.

Mr. Steele.—In their report on figs, there are two varieties left out that have proven to be very good with me. The Celeste, the little sugar fig, as it is called is always to be desired. The Poulette fig is one of the best that I ever tasted.

Mr. Blackman.—Some four or five years ago there was quite a stir about the Key grape. At several different times there were brought to my office, bunches that weighed from 3 to 5 pounds each, and much larger bunches, have been known to be produced. So far as we know they are a very good grape; but will not compare with some of the finer varieties. There is one difficulty regarding this grape, the berries do not ripen evenly and the vines are short lived. I know one party who secured a good many cuttings, all of which grew for a time and then died. Rev. Bolton of Coconut Grove at one time had a number of vines in fruiting; but they have since died out.