Apples, pears, and stone fruit

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Disappointing settings of pome fruits have been a feature of this season's crop reports. Hail caused heavy losses in restricted areas and a lot of fruit was blemished by looper caterpillars. The setting of stone fruits was particularly good.

**APPLES**

Flowering.—In contrast to the experience of recent years, delayed foliation was not a factor to be contended with this season and consequently most varieties flowered in their proper sequence. The flowering itself was even and mostly heavy, with the main exception of Jonathans. This variety flowered unevenly and gave little promise of setting a heavy crop.

Weather conditions during the latter part of October were mostly unseasonable, being cold, showery, and in the Southern and South-Western districts rain fell. These conditions followed a very dry and warm spring—conditions suitable for the rapid development of thrips. A careful watch was maintained and it was only in the Great Southern districts that they appeared in plague form. They were present in other districts in greater numbers than usual, particularly in the Hills districts. It was possible for some growers to take control measures and a number sprayed their orchards with D.D.T.

Setting.—Generally the setting has been disappointing. There was every indication that the crop would be uniformly heavy in the South-Western districts following last season's medium crop. The setting of some of the main varieties in these districts although not heavy, is reasonably good; the varieties concerned being Granny Smith, Cleopatras, Yates and Rokewoods, and to a lesser extent Jonathans. Most of the late varieties, including Statesman, Nickajacks and Rome Beauties, are much lighter than usual; Dunns have also set a very light crop. A feature of the crop in these districts is the evenness of the setting and excellent growth of the fruit. There is no doubt that severe winter temperatures prevented delayed foliation.

Very poor crops have set in the Great Southern districts, including Mt. Barker, Kendenup, Albany and Denmark. Thrips were present here in plague proportions and did considerable damage to the blossoms. It is significant that most growers who sprayed early, obtained good settings. On those orchards that were not sprayed, the trees are very light; it is most unusual to see numerous trees of such consistent bearers as Yates and Cleopatras completely devoid of fruit. These districts usually average 350,000 bushels of fruit annually, and as it is expected this season that the total pack out of fancy and better grades (export standards) will not exceed 50,000 bushels, it is apparent that a very severe blow has been dealt to the fruit production of the State.

A lighter than average setting was also experienced in the Hills districts. Thrips were present in the blossoms in large numbers, but at no stage did they approach plague proportions. It is apparent, however, that some damage was done and it is significant that where
sprayings with D.D.T. were carried out the setting was much heavier.

**Growing Conditions.** Growing conditions have been particularly good and trees in most orchards are making excellent growth. Average fruit size is much greater than has been the case for quite a number of years. There is an increase in the amount of leaf variegation or "chlorosis," but this condition does not cause much damage unless the season turns out very hot, when the chlorotic leaves tend to burn very readily.

Blemish due to insect bites is more common than usual. Extensive damage has been caused by looper caterpillar and to a lesser extent by climbing cutworm and spring beetle.

There are still a number of growers who delay control measures until they are satisfied that the expense is warranted; by that time the damage is often widespread. It is significant that where 0.1 per cent. D.D.T. was used against thrips, and arsenate of lead was applied immediately after petal fall, damage was negligible. On unsprayed orchards 60-100 per cent. of the fruit on the trees is marked; this is very apparent in the Great Southern districts.

"Dimpling" of Granny Smiths is common on light crop trees, but does not appear to be as widespread on trees which were sprayed with D.D.T. for thrips control. This matter will be investigated next season.

Generally, orchards are in good condition and the trees are making excellent growth. Such pests as the apple leafhopper and bryobia mite are not as yet causing concern.

Hail caused some damage in widely separated areas. A severe storm in early December ruined an area in the Donnybrook district; but, though unfortunately disastrous for the growers concerned, the damage was not spread over a large portion of this district. It is estimated that approximately 10,000 cases have been ruined.

**Estimate of Crop Production.**—It is estimated that the apple crop this year will approximate 1,037,000 bushels good and better grades.

**PEARS**

Following last season's heavy crop the setting has been disappointing, particularly in the Great Southern districts.

The most consistently good varieties are Bartletts and Keiffers and it is expected that these crops will approximate to 75 per cent. of last year's production. Export varieties such as Comice, Pachmans Triumph, Josephine and Beurre Bosc, have set light to medium crops and Winter Nelis much lighter.

The incidence of "Black Spot" has been severe, due no doubt to the moist spring and early summer weather conditions. Even on many sprayed orchards damage is considerable, not only on the foliage, but on the fruit as well.

**Estimate of Crop Production.**—It is estimated that the pear crop will approximate to 79,500 bushels good and better grades, of which Bartletts will amount to 27,000 and Keiffers to 8,000 bushels.

**STONE FRUITS**

Stone fruits have set heavily in all districts, with the possible exception of Goldmine nectarines. Mid-season and late varieties of apricots have not carried heavy crops for a number of years, but this season the setting has been good. One of the difficulties of a heavy stone fruit crop is the necessity for heavy thinnings; without this the fruit does not develop properly and consequently brings poor prices when marketed. The failure to thin adequately is due in some instances to lack of labour, but in others it is due to the attitude of the growers concerned. It is very noticeable that the higher market returns come to those who regulate the cropping of their trees by intelligent pruning and heavy thinning.