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# Nurseryman Benson On Citrus Fruit Culture

By request of the Editor of the News, who having noticed the awakening interest being manifested by the public in citrus fruit growing in this section, and it being his constant desire to be of service to his county, I am giving here briefly my observations after thirty years' active experience in growing and propagating citrus fruits in South Texas.

In the growing of any kind of fruits there are many conditions which must be considered, but I shall deal only with the more important points.

Climate, naturally must take precedent over all other conditions. We will first consider temperatures which will effect our subject, I am giving the record on lows since 1888 to date:

Yr.	Date	Tem.
1888	January 15	16
1892	January 8	25
1894	January 25	24
1895	February 14	16
1897	January 27	22
1899	February 12	11
1901	December 15	20
1905	January 14	26
1905	February 13	18
1909	January 12	24
1911	January 3	21
1912	January 13	22
1912	February 4	25
1916	January 13	26
1917	February 2	26
1918	January 12	20
1920	December 14	27

I have listed only dates on which a temperature of lower than 27 degrees was registered, as above this very little harm will be done, if trees are in proper condition. If trees have been properly cared for during the previous growing period, with the exception of very young trees, they will not be greatly harmed by a temperature of 22 degrees, and if thoroughly dormant will stand this and have known them to yield a good crop of fruit the following season.

Since 1911 the trees on my old place here in Sinton have missed only two crops on account of cold weather.

On Thanksgiving day, 1910, we had a heavy frost, which though doing no material harm to the trees, caused them to shed the foliage, being evergreen trees, they immediately started fresh growth, and the following freeze of 21 degrees on January, 3rd, was very severe on them, on account of the rising flow of sap induced by the previous defoliation. Since that date trees have suffered only a partial loss of wood.

In 1912, in my catalog, a copy of which is before me, I made this statement.

"That not withstanding the severe setback of the Citrus industry has received on the Texas coast, I would stake my reputation as a Nurseryman, after 18 years' experience that more fruit and greater returns would be received from citrus fruits, than other fruit found adapted to the coast. Of course this was met with a horse laugh, but time has proven the correctness of the assertion and the laughing skeptics are now wishing they had heeded the advice given.

## Moisture.

Temperatures disposed of, we will consider moisture the next element interring into successful growth. With proper spacing of trees and careful cultivation, very little added moisture will be found necessary. By digging earthen reservoirs, every farm can conserve sufficient water for the excess rainfall to tide over any ordinary

dry spell.

## Soils Suitable.

With the exception of the heavy black soils such as are found around Taft, Sodville, Gregory and Portland, the trees will do well in all other portions of the county.

The heavy soils around Mathis, Edroy, and other portions of the county where the black soil is covered by a heavy growth of mesquite, will grow good trees by proper selection of root stocks. Likewise the sandy portions around Aransas Pass, when proper stock is used.

## Root Stocks.

There are five stocks commonly used Pomelo or Grapefruit, Sweet Orange, Sour Orange, Rougs Lemon, and Citrus Trifoliata. In this short article, we will not be able to go into detail as to relative merits of these different root stocks, otherwise than to say that on account of their susceptibility to Maldigoma and other Gum diseases, the pomelo, sweet orange and lemon stocks are not desirable if others will succeed.

Before planting, the question of stocks should be well considered, and no reliable opinion can be rendered without special description of the plot to be planted.

## Varieties.

These should be considered primarily as to market value, and time of ripening.

By referring to the temperature table given, you will observe that it is a very risky plan to plant late ripening varieties, such as Lue Gim Gong, Temple, Valencia, Harts Late and other late ripening kinds. This is for two reasons, first the danger of having the fruit frozen, which is easily done while in the green stage, but will require around 22 degrees to freeze after formation of citric acid, and second of trees being more susceptible to cold, while loaded with fruit.

I would recommend varieties in order as follows—oranges; Satsumas, Pine-apple, Parson Brown, Redus, and Washington Navel. (The navel on C. T. Stock only, as it is not fit to eat, when grown on other stocks here.) Grapefruit: Duncan, Marsh Seedless, Silver Cluster. Kumquats: Neiwa, (Far the best) Nagami, Marumi. Lemons: Villa Franca, Kenedy.

I cannot recommend planting of lemons, more than one or two trees as they are too easily affected by cold.

## Time of Setting Out Trees

This is very important, and while all nurserymen would like to get his trees sold off early in the season, so as to get them out of the way for next years' work, and to let the purchaser take the risk of losing them on account of cold weather; you can see by examining the temperature table that

December 26—Local rain in Rio it is not safe to plant them until February at least. There are two reasons for this. First, planting size trees are usually small, and cold hurts them more. Second, being an evergreen tree, any citrus tree upon being dug up, unless the weather continues very cool indeed, will shortly start growth, and in this condition, a frost, which would be harmless to it in a dormant state, will kill the tree.

There are many other details, such as planting, pruning, cultivation (which is very important,) fertilizing, spraying and etc, which lack of space will not allow discussing.

Sinton Nursery,

J. W. Benson, Prop.