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PINEAPPLES IN FLORIDA.

The Shakers Have Made a Great Success with This Delicious Fruit.

By EZRA J. STEWART, Elder in the Shaker Community adjoining St. Cloud.

Editor *St. Cloud Tribune*: The pineapple is said to be of tropical origin, growing wild in South America, Mexico, and Central America; in fact, it is now found in most all tropical and semi-tropical countries, even in Asia and Africa. It is, however, but half a century since this delicious fruit was first introduced into Florida, where, owing to abundant moisture and other suitable climatic conditions, it attains great perfection in quality and size. Unsuccessful attempts have been made to introduce the pineapple industry into the dry climate of California, while in the West Indies and on the Hawaiian Islands, where there is sufficient moisture, pineapple culture has proved a great commercial success.

Some 15 or 20 years ago Mr. Geo. I. Russell, named by some

“Daddy of the pineapple industry,” began experimenting with a view to demonstrating the commercial possibilities of pineapple culture in Florida. He started with seven varieties, and after much painstaking investigation and experimenting, succeeded in advancing the industry from almost nothing to point where it became established as paying proposition. In order to have a better grade of fruit, he found it necessary to cultivate the finer varieties, and with this idea in mind assembled together some 37 varieties of pineapples, from which five were finally selected as being the best. Among these the Smooth Cayenne is thought by many growers to be the finest all-round fancy apple possible to grow.

Shading the Fruit.

Being found in forests in its wild state, where moisture and partial shade were always guaranteed, it was but natural to think of some sort of covering for the cultivated pineapple. In the early days some growers used thin cloth covering for their pinery sheds, but experience has proved that a half shade is best. Wooden slats three inches wide with an equal space between forms a latticelike covering which distributes the shade and sunlight evenly and protects both plant and fruit from too much sun, and also from frost. This sort of covering prevents “sunburn;” it enables the fruit to fully mature before ripening, and to some extent prevents the evaporation of moisture.

Some varieties, like the common Red Spanish, are grown in open fields quite successfully, altho it is generally conceded that they do not approach the shedded pines either in delicacy of flavor or tenderness of fiber. Pines grown in the open are apt to be full of core and woody fiber, besides being dimunitive in size.

Best Land for Pineapples.

Pineapples can be grown in Florida on almost any good level land which will hold moisture, altho there are some kinds of soil which are much superior to others for their culture. Of course, low, swampy places are excepted, and muck land is not suitable for this fruit. A mixture of sand and muck is preferable; a high, spruce-pine hammock is the best possible location for a pinery.

Longleaf pine lands will produce good sizeable apples for from three to five years, while spruce-pine lands continue to raise excellent fruit for an indefinite period of time. Being almost destitute of humus, these spruce-pine hammocks require the addition of muck or cow manure, but the latter



A PINEAPPLE

Weighing 15 pounds, raised by the Shaker
Community.

should be used judiciously, else there is danger of injury to the keeping qualities of the fruit.

Plowing and Fertilizing.

After dressing the sand land with a moderate amount of muck (dry, sifted muck is best), it should be plowed rather shallow, then fertilized with commercial fertilizer. Using cultivator to pulverize the soil and to mix in the fertilizer thoroughly, the beds are ready to level off with rakes preparatory to planting.

Blood, bone and potash in proper proportions furnish sufficient nourishment to develop fine, tender fruit and to grow healthy plants for propagative purposes. Sometimes nitrate of soda can be used with marvelous results in quickening the growth of young, backward plants, and in stimulating the growth of older plants which have become dwarfed through disease or lack of moisture. This fertilizer is immediately available for plant food, and often shows the effects of an application in 24 hours—more particularly when used to stimulate the growth of such vegetable as beets.

In fertilizing for pineapples about one-fourth to one-third of a pound of mixed fertilizer is required for each plant every three months.

Propagation is from seed, slips, suckers and crowns. Slips and suckers are most used, with a preference for the latter, as they grow from the body of the plants and are generally strong and healthy. Slips are formed near the base of the fruit and are of slower growth.

A vigorous 12-inch sucker will fruit in from 12 to 14 months, while a slip will take from 18 to 20 months to bear. Both should be stripped of a few leaves at the base of the plant, so as to expose the eyes or embryo roots. This will give the young plant a quick growth, but care should be taken not to strip off too much.

Pineapples should be planted in beds raised somewhat above the intervening paths. Plants are set seven to the row, 18 inches apart and 30 inches between the rows. Altho pineapples may be planted at any season of the year, it is best to await the rainy season, for the reason that plants root more readily and make a fine, rapid growth. If irrigated, they may be planted in a very dry time without fear of turning yellow or being stunted. About 9,000 plants to the acre will allow plenty room for thrifty growth and proper development of fruit.

Pineapple plants should be well fed; they will repay generous

fertilization in superior size and quality of fruit. Fertilizer should be hoed in with a scuffle hoe, care being taken not to hoe deep about the plants. Weeds and grass should be kept hoed out with a scuffle hoe, as they thrive at the expense of both plants and fertilizer. In throwing away old plants that have borne fruit and suckers, care should be taken to knock off the dirt attached to the roots, as this becomes rich in fertilizer and would amount, in the course of time, to a considerable item.

In the Summer season pineapples may be gathered when just beginning to show signs of turning yellow; in Winter it is necessary to allow them to become thoroughly ripe on the stock before picking.

In some sections of Florida pineapples are shipped to Northern markets in carload lots; some growers are said to ship as high as 30 carloads per day in the Summer season. Growers of shedded pines generally supply fancy markets in large Northern cities, which demand uniformity in size and quality and regular shipments. There is always a limited local market for Summer fruit at good prices, but growers of fancy apples should work together to establish a regular shipping market, and this can readily be done by assiduously cultivating excellence in quality of fruit and in careful attention to packing and handling.

High grade pineapples weighing from 8 to 12 pounds should net the grower \$6 per crate of one dozen apples. They are packed in excelsior, and will keep from two to four weeks, which gives ample time for sale and shipment to distant points.

Uses of the Pineapple.

It is said on good authority that pineapple juice will cure malaria and dyspepsia: that it is a valuable antiseptic; that physicians have used pineapple juice successfully in the treatment of diphtheria. It seems to clear the throat, so that swallowing is made easier and much needed rest is thereby induced.

Undoubtedly this fruit aids the process of digestion, and some Florida physicians living near the pineries are accustomed to use ripe pineapples regularly on their own tables. By placing a piece of meat in a jar of juice any one can demonstrate the digestive properties of the pineapple. No healthier or finer fruit could be grown for home consumption than the Florida pineapple, king of fruits.

The leaves of the pineapple plant furnish a fiber which is said to stand high in tests of strength; it has been demonstrated that pineapple fiber



A BANANA PATCH
Only Four Months Old on the Land of the Shaker Community.



A FRUITING BANANA PATCH
On the Grounds of the Shaker Community, Adjoining St. Cloud.

is superior to New Zealand flax, and even the best English flax. Florida fiber when immersed in cold water and dried in the sun becomes almost white and is finer and softer than any other leaf fiber known. In this day of utilizing waste products pineapple leaves can be made to furnish rope and cloth of superior strength and durability.

In the Hawaiian Islands the canning of pineapples has become a profitable industry, and there is no reason why this branch of the business should not become a large factor in marketing the output of our Florida pineries. As the acreage increases there will be an abundance of fine fruit, which will furnish profitable material for use in canning factories.

Peas and Beans.

These valuable legume products are right at home in Florida. The cowpea is one of the best soil enrichers known, and it plays an important part as a stock food. The Soy bean is a remarkable plant. In Japan and China, from earliest times it has been extensively used for food. The bean contains no starch and is rich in protein and fat. From this bean the Japanese make a variety of preparations which balance the starch in the rice so extensively consumed. These bean products take the place of meat and other nitrogenous animal food in the Japanese and Chinese dietary. They are eaten in some form or other by rich and poor at almost every meal. Among other preparations is a bean cheese, which can be reduced to a liquid form not unlike milk. The frugal Swiss of recent years are now cultivating the Soy bean not only as a table food, but roast it as a substitute for coffee. So far in this country the Soy bean is not appreciated to its full value, and livestock get the benefit of its good qualities.





A BUNCH OF BEEF CATTLE
On the Grounds of the Shaker Community.

