

Orchard-registration and Orchard-tax.

This work is now on a more satisfactory footing, the requirements of the Act being better understood by the public. A considerable amount of correspondence and adjusting is still, however, necessary in order to bring delinquents into line with the regulations. It is estimated that a hundred thousand orchards, from one tree upwards, are now registered, and of these there are some eight thousand taxable orchards. According to the figures supplied by the Postal Department, through which the orchard-tax is collected, the sum of £1,800 had been received for the year ended 31st March, 1918. All moneys received are paid over to the New Zealand Fruitgrowers' Federation (Limited), less cost of collection, and are expended in furthering the interests of the fruitgrowing industry in the Dominion.

Grading Fruit-trees.

A new feature of the work of the division is the proposed grading of fruit-trees. This is a matter of considerable importance, and there is no doubt trees should be graded in order that every purchaser may know the class of tree he should receive according to the price charged by the nurseryman. It is hoped to have the regulations gazetted at an early date.

REGISTRATION OF NURSERIES.

This is the second year in which the regulations providing for the registration and inspection of nurseries have been in force.

The regulations have been well received, and are generally recognized to be of value in restricting the spread of plant-diseases by means of infected nursery stock.

During the year 438 nursery properties were registered and inspected, being an increase of fifty-eight as compared with the previous year.

PROPOSED SCHOOL OF HORTICULTURE.

A matter of special importance which has been receiving the serious consideration of the Department is the proposed establishment of a Dominion school of horticulture. It has been recognized for some considerable time that such an institution would be a splendid means of imparting knowledge in the various branches of horticulture to young men and women, and also assist those now engaged in the nursery and gardening profession to gain greater scientific knowledge. It is hoped the proposal will take definite shape before long.

HORTICULTURAL STATIONS.

Te Kauwhata.

In addition to the class of work that naturally suggests itself in connection with such stations, the following has been attended to:—

The planting of four commercial-orchard areas of 10 acres each. These areas, which are progressing satisfactorily, are intended for future settlement.

The planting of 5 acres with commercial varieties of apples. This area forms part of the homestead, and is intended for demonstrating the various matters in connection with commercial fruitgrowing.

The planting of an experimental apple-orchard of about 4 acres. This area is intended for experimental pruning, spraying, manuring, &c.

A series of spraying experiments have been carried out with the object of ascertaining the relative values of the different oil-emulsions for the control of insect pests, as well as similar fungicidal tests for the control of such diseases as black-spot, brown-rot, &c. These experiments were carefully carried out, and proved of considerable value.

Arataki.

Apart from the ordinary work of the station, which is mainly of an experimental and educational character, a series of spray-testing and spraying experiments were carried out. This was made the main feature of the station's work. The whole of the fruit-trees of the station were utilized for the purpose. The experiments created considerable interest among the fruitgrowers of the district, and have provided valuable information on such matters as the control of brown-rot. Similar experiments will be undertaken during the coming season.

Tauranga.

This station is still under the process of renovation. In the meantime experimental work has been carried out.

The newly established nursery for the purpose of raising the fruit-trees required for the future planting at Te Kauwhata, and other departmental requirements, is progressing satisfactorily, and is now fairly well stocked with young trees.

Owing to the Bay of Plenty district being highly suited for citrus-fruit culture, it is intended to make this class of work a strong feature of the station's activities. In this connection about 7 acres of land have been prepared, and will be planted later on in the season with citrus trees on commercial lines.

Stock testing for both citrus and deciduous fruit-trees will also be thoroughly gone into. A start in this direction is being made this season. Preparations have also been made for the planting of some 4 acres of apples and pears for experimental purposes.