

Australasian (Melbourne, Vic. : 1864 - 1946), Saturday 12 August 1911, page 13**BITTER PIT INVESTIGATION.**

There is such a conflict of opinion as to the cause of bitter pit, and consequently of the measures to be taken in dealing with it, that it is absolutely necessary to have some solid foundation of fact to go upon. Mr. D. M'Alpine, therefore, proposes to carry out a series of exact experiments and systematic observations, both in the laboratory and in the orchard.

In the orchard those factors will receive first attention which are more or less within the control of the orchardist himself; and Mr. M'Alpine wishes to point out that the mistake is often made in studying this disease of confining attention entirely to the fruit of the apple or pear, whereas the fruit is only the outcome of various antecedent conditions, so that every possible factor which contributes to the growth of the tree, as well as the formation of fruit, will require to be taken into account.

There are three principal lines of investigation that will be followed, viz., manuring, pruning, and stocks for propagation.

1. The influence of manures or different kinds of plant-food on the development of the disease.

2. The influence of different methods of pruning in regulating the distribution of the fruit on the tree as well as the nutritive juices to different parts.

3. The internal factor or heredity will be studied in so far as it is influenced by the variety or the stocks used for propagation.

Attention will also be paid to the influence of different cultural methods in conserving the moisture for the use of the tree when most wanted, and promoting uniform growth.

The question of plant-food is closely associated with that of soil-manure, and the available quantity of moisture determines in a large measure whether the fruit will reach its normal size or not.

Experiments on these main lines will be started at once in the different States concerned, and various theories as to the cause of bitter pit will be tested, as well as various practices which have an influence upon it.

Among other things, investigations will be undertaken during the coming season to settle the question how, when, and where does the disease first appear in the fruit.

There are numerous other experiments to be carried out in due course, but the point which Mr. M'Alpine wishes to insist on is this—that the main object of these experiments will be to determine, as far as possible, what practices are beneficial, and thus arrive at some reasonable and practicable means of dealing with this menace to the fruit industry.

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