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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Wednesday, January 22, 1941.

Subject: "PLANT RESEARCH AND THE HOMEMAKER." Information from the annual report of the Bureau of Plant Industry, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

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Today we're bringing you some highlights from the plant research of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. They're told in the latest annual report of the Bureau of Plant Industry. Of course, as homemakers, you are probably most interested in food plants, and as we can't begin to cover all the ground in this 40-page report, we'll just stick to developments in fruits and vegetables. In that we'll be following the emphasis on good nutrition that is such an important part of our national defense program, and there's one unusually interesting discovery about vitamin C we can promise you.

Let's begin with apples. Most of us would choose a fine bright red apple, if we're buying a red variety rather than a poorly colored one. Well, the plant scientists have learned that if the apple leaves have too much nitrogen at harvest time, the color of the apples will not be very good. The time the apple tree needs an abundance of nitrogen fertilizer is in the spring, when the tree is growing fast. For best color and finish of the fruit, the orchardist should fertilize well in the spring-time, but not in the late summer. And the same is true for the single apple tree in the home garden.

Here's another thing the research men have found out about the color of certain apples,- the new red strains of the Delicious variety. That variety, extensively grown in the Northwest, is sold all over the United States. The apples of these red strains may become fully colored long before they are ripe enough to eat or to harvest. If you pick them when they look ripe, you may be in for a big

disappointment. In fact, it takes about 142 days under Pacific Northwest conditions from the time the Delicious apple tree is in full bloom for the fruit to reach good eating quality. So now, as a result of the Bureau's investigations, the State and Federal inspection service in the State of Washington will not certify the new red strains of Delicious apples as properly mature "unless they are harvested at least 142 days after full bloom."

Apple research has also resulted in finding some plant-growth substances which can be sprayed on apple trees and fruit just before harvesting to delay the dropping of the fruit. Aside from preventing losses due to early dropping, this discovery results in greatly improving the color and size of certain varieties when the fruit remains longer on the trees.

As far as the housewife is concerned, the effect of such discoveries is to provide our tables with better quality fruit, and often, to cut its cost, when the grower's losses are reduced.

We may be eating new and better varieties of peaches, raspberries, blackberries and tomatoes in the near future. Five new peach varieties have been named and released to nurserymen. Of course we'll have to wait several years before commercial crops are grown from these varieties, but if you'd like to know the variety names, they are: Dixigold, an early yellow freestone peach, adapted to growing in the extreme southern peach belt; Leeton and Maxine, two early yellow-fleshed varieties for California conditions, and two other varieties, clingstones, for west coast canning.

We should not have to wait as long as for the new peaches, to taste Sunrise raspberries, grown in southern raspberry regions. Sunrise raspberry is a hardy, disease-resistant, early ripening variety. Then there are two new western trailing blackberry varieties, named Pacific and Cascade. Both have the fine flavor of wild blackberries, are very productive, and are suitable for canning and for freezing.

Note that characteristic--"Suitable for canning and for freezing." Some fruit and vegetable varieties are good for canning but not for freezing, and vice versa.

Both the two improved tomato varieties reported, Essar and Riverside, are resistant to verticillium wilt, a disease prevalent in the cooler tomato-growing sections of the West. The fruits are uniform in size and shape, with bright color, smooth surface, meaty texture, and good flavor. These varieties are adapted to the West but are not grown extensively in the East.

There has been a large demand for vegetables adapted to growing in the central Great Plains region. The Bureau of Plant Industry report says its scientists have proved experimentally that the Early Cheyenne pumpkin, the Danmark tomato, the Triumph and Green Doublehead varieties of orach or saltbush spinach, are all adapted to the Great Plains. The Bureau has released the seeds to the seedsmen who supply the region.

Now about the striking discovery we mentioned before. It is reported under soil investigations. As everyone knows, we depend on the citrus fruits,-- oranges, grapefruit, lemons,-- for much of the vitamin C needed in our diet. It seems there is a definite connection between a certain appearance of the leaves on a citrus plant, and the amount of vitamin C in the fruit.

When citrus leaves look bronzed or have yellowish patterns called "frenching", it indicates a deficiency of magnesium in the soil. Lack of this mineral in the plant's food decreases the vitamin C content of the fruit. But the orchardist can remedy the trouble by adding magnesium to the diet of his tree. This peculiar appearance of the leaves shows up in the leaves of the cover crop in a citrus orchard before it does in the citrus leaves. So the grower can give his orchard the necessary mineral supply in plenty of time to influence the vitamin C content of his oranges or grapefruit.

Since good nutrition is so important in our national defense program, we certainly hope every citrus grower will be on the watch for bronzing or frenching of the cover crop and citrus leaves, and give his plants the right mineral combination to produce fruit with plenty of vitamin C content!

Tomorrow, questions and answers.

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