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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed January 8, 1927

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SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA LIGHTS UP

Towards the end of December, southern California began lighting her hundreds of thousands of orchard heaters, much to the disgust of those who think only of their immediate comfort. It is unfortunate but true that good oranges cannot be produced if the grower lets them freeze, and that the only economically practicable method of keeping them from freezing is to make fires in the orchards on the cold quiet nights. Smoke is, therefore, an apparently unavoidable by product of California oranges.

Orchard heating has become a surprisingly extensive business in southern California. Such large quantities of oil are consumed in the heaters that towns in fruit districts often complain of the smoke nuisance. The old type of heater, designed to produce a smudge, however, is no longer in general use, for it has been found better to heat the air than to try simply to reduce the cooling with a blanket of smoke.

Mr. Floyd D. Young, of the fruit frost service of the U. S. Weather Bureau, is compiling data on orchard heating in the eight fruit districts. The Redlands-San Bernardino district, for example, has almost 30,000 acres devoted to citrus trees, of which nearly 20 per cent. are equipped with heaters. As recently as the spring of 1925 only about half that number were in use. Ordinarily about 50 nine-gallon oil heaters are used for every acre, thus this requires over 2,000,000 gallons of kerosene, or approximately 250 carloads for a single filling of the quarter of a million heaters. As the heaters must be frequently replenished, storage tanks are placed in the orchards.

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