

A Science Service Feature

Released upon receipt  
but intended for use  
May 10, 1930

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed May 3, 1930

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HEATING THE ORCHARD

Frost is the chief weather hazard of fruit-growing in the United States and Canada. It is said to damage apples alone, in the United States, to the average extent of \$40,000,000 a year, though the apple is one of the hardier fruits and blossoms comparatively late in the spring. How can these losses be reduced?

Orchard-heating is a costly method of protection. In certain regions and in connection with the growth of certain fruits it is an economically sound practice, but in most fruit-growing regions it does not give results justifying the expense involved. The U. S. Department of Agriculture says:

"In the case of citrus fruits in many localities frost protection becomes a part of the necessary practice involved in regular and profitable production. In the case of apples the hazards are not so great as with citrus fruits and under normal conditions, outside of the Pacific northwest, the additional crop insurance provided by orchard-heating is not sufficient to justify investment in the necessary equipment and its operation."

It should be added that even in the restricted areas where orchard-heating is an established practice it could hardly be carried on economically without the aid of an intensive system of temperature observations and frost predictions, such as the U. S. Weather Bureau maintains in its "fruit-frost" services, the principal theater of which is the citrus-growing region of southern California.

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