

ABOUT OUR COVER

HOOD RIVER VALLEY HORTICULTURE

Gone are the legendary days when Mt. Hood and Mt. Adams engaged in terrific quarrels—growling and rumbling and belching forth billowing black smoke as they spat ashes and threw stones.

Perhaps time has mellowed their tempers, for today they are content to sit silently as lofty, snow-capped guardians of the Hood River Valley—Mt. Adams to the North and Mt. Hood to the southwest.

The valley, just over 60 miles east of downtown Portland, is one of Oregon's leading pear-producing areas and leads the nation in production of the high-quality, delicate-flavored 'Anjou' pear. Some 'Bosc', 'Comice' and 'Bartlett' pears also are grown.

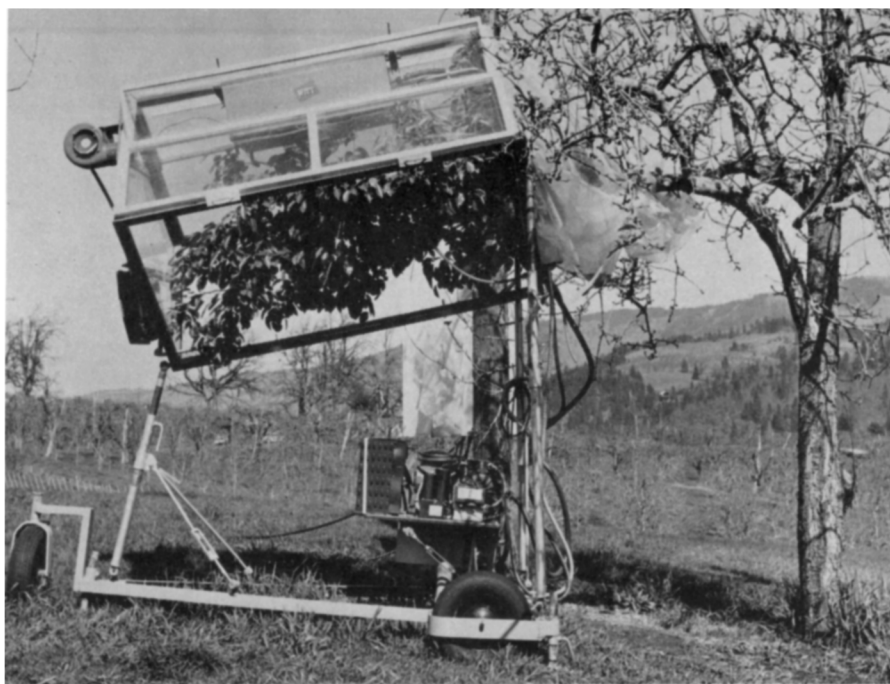
Fruit trees arrived in the valley shortly after the first permanent settlers came in 1854. Lumbering was the main industry at the time, and large orchards weren't established until the 1880's. However, deep soils, abundant rainfall, a mild climate and long sunny summer days were good to the young trees and, by 1900, the valley earned a worldwide reputation for its fruit production. At the time, apples, rather than pears, were the leading crop.

Apples continued to be the leading horticultural crop until the winter of 1919, which went down as one of the coldest winters on record with temperatures plunging to -27 degrees. Growers discovered that pear trees survived the severe weather better than apple trees and gradually shifted to pear production.

Although apples are still important to the area's economy, about 75 percent of the orchard acreage is devoted to pears. Strawberries once had a role in valley agriculture, but commercial production peaked in 1930 and has since virtually disappeared.

Today, Hood River Valley is becoming famous for beauty—as well as the fruit—produced by its two leading horticultural crops. Thousands of motorists flock to the valley each spring to witness the sea of color delicate pear and apple blossoms create as they hail the beginning of a new season. A suggested "blossom route" winds through miles of scenic orchards ringed by deep green forests and accented with the presence of Mt. Adams and Mt. Hood.

Hood River's annual "Blossom Day," set for the first Sunday after April 20, brings visitors from throughout the West to the valley. In addition to a scenic drive, the Blossom Day visitor with an



Part of this pear tree is still waiting for spring, but one limb has been rushed well into summer with use of a temperature-control limb cage. The cages, designed to aid Mid-Columbia Experiment Station horticulturalists solve problems facing Hood River fruit growers, can duplicate climatic conditions with day-night temperature combinations ranging from 20 to 120°F. (Refer *HortScience* 7:134-136. 1972).

appetite can indulge in numerous "feeds" and "dinners" offered by local organizations. He also can go on an organized trail ride (if he brings his own horse) and can tour area fruit packing and storage facilities.

To assist growers in maintaining the valley's fruit-producing reputation, the Mid-Columbia Agricultural Experiment Station near the community of Hood River maintains an extensive horticultural research program. Station research involves solving pome and stone fruit production problems and storage problems of apples and pears. Intensive programs on control of insect and disease pests are also part of the Station's work. The Station shares

facilities and works cooperatively with a USDA field research program devoted chiefly to disease problems of pome fruits.

The valley, 20 miles long and 10 miles wide, is in the transitional zone between western and eastern Oregon where the Cascade Mountains to the west quickly give way to the desert areas to the east. Orchards range from an elevation of 79 feet along the banks of the Columbia River where the growing season is about 180 days to 2,500 feet on the eastern slopes of the Cascades and the slopes of Mt. Hood where the growing season is about 140 days.

Most of the valley's productive lands are under irrigation. The permanent mantle of snow and ice capping Mt. Hood is a source of continual flow of pure water in the Hood River which slices through the valley and empties into the Columbia River.

Tourism and recreation are growing industries in the area. Mt. Hood is one of the most climbed mountains in the nation. Nearby Lost Lake, mirroring Mt. Hood, is one of Oregon's most photographed lakes. Bonneville Dam, the Columbia River Gorge with sheer vertical walls in some places and picturesque communities such as Rhododendron, Zigzag, Weeme and Brightwood can all be visited in an afternoon's drive from Hood River.

However, horticulture promises to be king in the Hood River Valley for some time to come.

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Field-run 'Anjou' pears.