

## Florida Best for Oranges

M. E. Gillett Has Returned from Visit to California

### Production Cheaper

Four-Year-Old Florida Tree Is as Large as a California Tree at Six Years—Our Crops Heavier

That it would be as feasible to grow oranges in south Georgia or Alabama as in California, if the same attention was paid to heating, is the opinion expressed by M. E. Gillett, of Tampa, in an interview given the press. Mr. Gillett has returned from a trip to California, made with both business and pleasure in mind. He visited an olive nursery of 200,000 trees, which his brother and himself established there, when it developed that California fruit growers were turning to olive trees as more profitable than citrus trees for that state.

Mr. Gillett, who is an interesting conversationalist, spoke as follows:

"I was much surprised to see how their groves recuperated from the cold of two years ago, but conditions in California are so different from what they are in Florida; it is hard for a Floridian to conceive of a tree living after having gone through a temperature of twelve or fourteen degrees for several nights. Their soil conditions, however, are much different from ours. We have an open, porous, sandy soil into which the heat penetrates rapidly and it is easily warmed up so that our trees never become as thoroughly dormant as theirs do. Their soil, on the contrary, is heavy, with quite an admixture of clay and it takes a long time for the heat to penetrate. They have their rainy season in the winter and these rains are generally cold. If they have a few warm days, the ground does not become sufficiently heated to start growth in the trees as is the case in Florida, consequently when a cold spell strikes them, as it does many times each winter, the trees are absolutely dormant—much in the condition of our oaks and withstand a degree of cold which would not be possible in Florida.

"It looked strange to me, as I drove by the different groves, to see so many heaters among the trees and these are not mere smudge pots, but great big heaters, which will hold twelve to fourteen gallons of oil. It looked to me as though it would be just about as feasible to grow oranges in south Georgia or Alabama if as much attention was paid to the heating of the groves on cold nights. At any rate, I was satisfied that they have much colder weather in California than we have in Florida and everything I saw went to prove it.

"The groves in California are, I think, as a rule, better cared for than most of those in Florida, as they seem to take a great deal of pride in keeping their grounds in beautiful condition. As a rule, however, the trees at the same age are much smaller than in Florida and are planted a good deal closer together.

#### Believe We Have Been Hurt.

"I visited a number of the largest packing houses and in nearly every instance they wanted to know how badly we were hurt by last winter's cold. I told them we had no cold whatever except what they saw in the Los Angeles papers. It has gotten so, however, if the weather bureau predicts a cold in Georgia, Alabama, or any of the southern states, for that matter, the Los Angeles papers at once come out with big headlines claiming that Florida is freezing out again. When I told them that we keep a very accurate account of the weather at Lucerne Park and that we had been growing cucumbers, tomatoes, peppers and other tender vegetables there all winter right out in the open without

any protection whatever, they could hardly believe it, as they supposed we had been seriously injured.

"At another large packing house they said they were sorry to hear that practically all of the crop for next year had been whipped off the trees by a terrible storm which passed over Florida. I told them I had heard nothing of this and that we had the biggest bloom I had ever seen since I lived in the state. Californians are great boosters and it is a very difficult matter to get the truth from the rank and file, but friends of mine with whom I had a heart to heart talk told me that the industry was at a low ebb in California—that they had received very little for their crop this season—that while some growers got good prices, the bulk of them received practically nothing and they were very much discouraged. I talked with a friend of mine who is in the fertilizer business and he said that growers told him there was no use to figure with them, that they needed fertilizer, there was no question about it, but that they were getting nothing for their fruit and they could not afford to pay for fertilizer and really they saw no use in putting it on to produce more fruit unless they could get better prices for it.

#### Only Hope Is Freeze Here.

"Another large grower told me the only hope he could see for the California grower was that Florida should freeze out again. I called on a friend of mine in Los Angeles who is in the real estate business. One or two other real estate men were in the room and they questioned me regarding relative values in Florida and California. One of them said, 'You, of course, have had long years of experience in Florida and you have visited California several times and are somewhat familiar with conditions. Suppose you were living in Chicago, knowing what you do, where would you go if you wanted to go into the citrus fruit business, and why?' I told them that the answer to that was very easy.

"Now," said I, 'suppose we make a few figures and I think I can convince you why a man should go to Florida. Suppose that I wanted to buy ten acres of land in one of the best districts around Los Angeles. What would the raw land cost?'

"They said 'about \$700 per acre.'

"Then this land has to be leveled so that it can be irrigated, which would cost \$25 to \$50 per acre more. After everything is in readiness to plant you would plant your trees and in the course of time they would begin to bear fruit. We in Florida could grow as large a tree in four years as you can in six. When your fruit is grown and ready to ship it is 3,000 miles from the big markets, ours is about 1,200. Time of delivery from Florida ought to be about one-half what it would be from California. Our freight rates are 33 1-3 per cent less. After the fruit reaches the market Florida outsold yours during the past season in pretty nearly every case, which is conclusive evidence that Florida grows the better fruit.

"And then you grow no grapefruit whatever, while grapefruit is getting to be a very large part of our business and a very profitable part of it. Land in Florida suitable for citrus culture can be bought at \$25 to \$125 per acre, according to location. It will cost \$25 per acre to clear it and get it ready to plant. Now," said I, 'can you show me one good reason why I should come to

## Indian River Groves Company Starting to Develop 200 Acres to Grape Fruit

An opportunity to obtain a four-acre bearing grape fruit grove on the easy payment plan is offered by the Indian River Groves company, that has just begun operations.

The company has acquired from the Indian River Farms company 200 acres of fine marl prairie land five miles from Vero, admirably suited to growing citrus fruits. The land will be sold in five-acre tracts and four acres of each tract will be set to grape fruit trees and maintained for a period of seven years. In order to reduce the cost to the purchaser the company has evolved the plan of making the grove partly pay for itself by deducting from the fruit yield of the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh years, the cost of fertilizer and labor and dividing the balance with the purchaser.

One acre of each tract will be set to trees each year for four years. The first acre set will come into bearing the fourth year. After the cost of fertilizer and labor is deducted from the sale of the fruit the remainder will be divided equally between the purchaser and the company. The same plan will be followed the fifth, sixth and seventh years.

The company believes its plan will meet a demand for bearing groves from persons who have no capital to develop them. It is estimated that the purchaser's share of the income from the fourth, fifth and sixth year will pay half the original cost of the grove. By making small monthly payments it will be possible, under this plan, for persons in moderate circumstances to acquire a grape fruit grove that should yield them an independent income, when in full bearing.

D. M. Mason is general manager of the company and Fred Mueller, manager of the Indian River Development company of Vero, is grove supervisor. The main offices of the company are at Vero.

California, after all the reasons I have shown you why I should go to Florida?"

#### Compared With Florida Figures.

"Myself and son are planting a thousand-acre grove at Lucerne Park, one hundred ten-acre tracts. We furnish the land, clear it, plant it with the very best grade of trees, fertilize and care for these trees for five years, giving the owner the benefit of the fruit which is produced during that time and turn this bearing grove over to him at the end of five years at \$650 per acre, which is less than the first cost of your raw land."

"One party said if they had nothing else they had more beautiful scenery, as they had the mountains, which we did not have in Florida. This I had to admit, but I called his attention to the fact that in place of mountains we had lakes and that one party in California had told me he would trade all mountains in the state for one of our beautiful lakes.

"I, of course, was interested also in the nurseries, as I wanted to compare their work with what we do here and I wrote home that I was very well satisfied that I was doing a nursery business in Florida instead of California. In our loose, sandy soil we grow a magnificent root system and the trees can be transplanted with naked roots. In California their soil is heavier and richer, so that the young plant does not require such a large amount of feeding roots and the result is that if they try to take up a tree and plant it with naked roots they lose a large proportion of them and the only way in which they can successfully make a

tree live is to dig around it and put a sack under the roots, bringing it up around the trunk of the tree and tying it there so as to hold all the earth around the roots. One tree weighs about fifty pounds and 500 trees would constitute a carload, while here we can ship from 7,000 to 10,000 in a car very easily.

#### Packing Houses Are No Better.

"I inspected a number of their best packing houses, but found nothing better than we have in a number of our exchange houses in Florida. They seemed quite surprised to find that we had houses equipped with all the necessary machinery to handle fruit in the most approved manner. I had to take off my hat to them, however, when it came to the price they get per acre for bearing orange groves, as in my opinion a grove in Florida of the same age is easily worth double what it is in California, all things considered, and yet in Florida we are selling groves for less than half what they get for theirs, though, in my opinion the time will soon come when Florida orange groves will be rated at something like their true value. I think any Florida grower who will visit California and investigate conditions there carefully will come home feeling very much as I did—perfectly satisfied that his grove is in Florida rather than in California.

"Everywhere I went I found people anxious to learn all they could about Florida, stating that sooner or later they hoped to make their home in the south and they felt that Florida had more to offer than any other southern state."

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