

**THE MINIATURE FRUIT
GARDEN; OR, THE
CULTURE OF PYRAMIDAL
AND BUSH FRUIT TREES**

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The Miniature Fruit Garden; Or, the Culture of Pyramidal and Bush Fruit Trees by Thomas Rivers

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THOMAS RIVERS

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THE
MINIATURE FRUIT GARDEN;

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THE CULTURE

OF

PYRAMIDAL AND BUSH

FRUIT TREES;

WITH INSTRUCTIONS FOR ROOT-PRUNING.

&c. &c.

BY THOMAS RIVERS.

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INTRODUCTION.

My attention was drawn to the benefits fruit trees derive from root-pruning and frequent removal about the year 1810. I was then a youth, with a most active fruit-appetite, and if a tree bearing superior fruit could be discovered in my father's orchard-like nursery, I was very constant in my visits to it.

In those days there was in the old nursery, first cropped with trees by my grandfather about the middle of the last century, a "quarter"—*i.e.*, a piece of ground devoted to the reception of refuse trees—of such trees as were too small or weak for customers, so that in taking up trees for orders during the winter they were left, and in spring all taken up and transplanted to the "hospital quarter," as the labourers called it. The trees in this quarter were often removed—they were, in nursery parlance, "driven together" when they stood too thinly in the ground; or, in other words, taken up, often annually, and planted nearer together on the same piece of ground. This old

nursery contained about eight acres, the soil a deep reddish loam, inclining to clay, in which fruit trees flourished and grew vigorously. I soon found that it was but of little use to look among the young free-growing trees for fruit, but among the refuse trees, and to the "hospital quarter" I was indebted for many a fruit-feast—*such* Ribston Pippins! *such* Golden Pippins!

When I came to a thinking age, I became anxious to know why those refuse trees never made strong, vigorous shoots like those growing in their immediate neighbourhood, and yet nearly always bore good crops of fruit. Many years elapsed before I saw "the reason why," and long afterwards I was advised by a friend, a F.H.S., to write a crude, short paper on the subject, and send it to be read at a meeting of the Horticultural Society: this paper is published in their "Transactions." I had then practised it several years; so that I may now claim a little more attention if the old adage that "practice makes perfect" be worthy of notice.

This little work is not designed for the gardens and gardeners of the wealthy and great, but for those who take a personal interest in fruit-tree culture, and who look on their gardens as a never-failing source of amusement. In some few favoured districts, fruit trees, without any extra

care in planting and after-management, will bear good crops, and remain healthy for many years. It is not so in gardens with unfavourable soils; and they are greatly in the majority. It is to those possessing such, and more particularly to the possessors of small gardens, that the directions here given may prove of value. The object constantly had in view is to make fruit trees healthy and fruitful by keeping their roots near the surface. The root-pruning and biennial removal so earnestly recommended are the proper means to bring about these results, as they place the roots within the influence of the sun and air. The ground over the roots of garden trees as generally cultivated is dug once or twice a-year, so that every surface-fibre is destroyed and the larger roots driven downwards: they, consequently, imbibe crude watery sap, which leads to much apparent luxuriance in the trees. This in the end is fatal to their well-doing, for the vigorous shoots made annually are seldom or never ripened sufficiently to form blossom-buds. Canker then comes on, and although the trees do not die they rarely give fruit, and in a few years become victims of bad culture, existing in a sort of living death.

There is, perhaps, no fruit tree that claims or deserves our attention equal to the pear. How delicious is a fine melting pear all the winter

months! and to what a lengthened period in the spring may they be brought to table! Till lately *Beurré Rance* has been our best spring pear; but this is a most uncertain variety, rarely keeping till the end of May, and often ripening in January and February.

The new Belgian pears, raised many years since by the late Major *Esperen*, and more recently by *Monsieur Grégoire*, are likely for the present to be the most valuable for prolonging the season of rich melting pears; and of these *Josephine de Malines* and *Bergamotte d'Esperen* are especially deserving of notice; they have the excellent quality of ripening slowly. But improvement will, I have no doubt, yet take place; for pears are so easily raised from seed, and so soon brought into bearing by grafting or budding them on the quince stock, that new and valuable late pears will soon be as plentiful as new roses.

In the following pages it will be seen that I strongly advocate the culture of pyramidal fruit trees. This is no new idea with me. I have paid many visits to the Continental gardens during the greater portion of my active life of business, and have always admired their pyramidal trees when well managed, and I have for many years cultivated them for my amusement; but, owing to a seeming prejudice against them among some English gardeners, I was for some time deterred

from recommending them, for I thought that men older than myself must know better; and when I heard some of our market-gardeners and large fruit-growers in the neighbourhood of London scoff at pears grafted on the quince stock, as giving fruit of very inferior flavour, I concluded, like an Englishman, that the foreigners were very ignorant, and very far behind us in the culture of fruit trees.

It was only by repeated visits to foreign gardens that this prejudice was dispelled; and when I saw the beautiful pear trees in the Jardin des Plantes at Paris under the management of Monsieur Cappe, alluded to in *Gardener's Chronicle*, No. 28, 1847, I felt convinced that our neighbours excelled us in the management of fruit trees adapted to the open borders of our gardens. I have, therefore, endeavoured to make the culture of pyramidal trees easy to the uninitiated; and, having profited largely by experience in attending to it with my own hands, I trust that my readers will benefit by the result.

A humid mild climate seems extremely favourable to the well-doing of the pear on the quince stock. Jersey, with its moist warm climate, as is well known, produces the finest pears in Europe: these are for the most part from trees on quince stocks. The western coast of Scotland, I have reason to know, is favourable for the culture of