

# The Culture of the Blueberry

## The Infancy of a Great Business

**T**AMING WILD THINGS.—Can you imagine the first American who dug up wild plants of strawberry or raspberry and started to tame them in gar-



Nursery-tree, Showing Well-formed Buds which Did Not Make Branches. Fig. 120

den culture? It probably seemed to his neighbors and friends such a foolish waste of time to cultivate these plants when the woods and fields were alive with hardy plants which grew like weeds. Yet that first plant tamer, whoever he was, persevered. He selected and planted and cultivated until what seemed like a foolish and useless enterprise grew into a vast and necessary business. One by one our cultivated fruits have been brought in from the wilderness against the protest of Nature and man and put at work. After a struggle these wild things put on the harness of civilization and helped pull mankind nearer to comfort and profit. Now another of these wild things is being taken out of the swamps and put into the garden. This is the blueberry. We may now see the beginning of a business which is likely to change the history of a State, or at least one section of it.

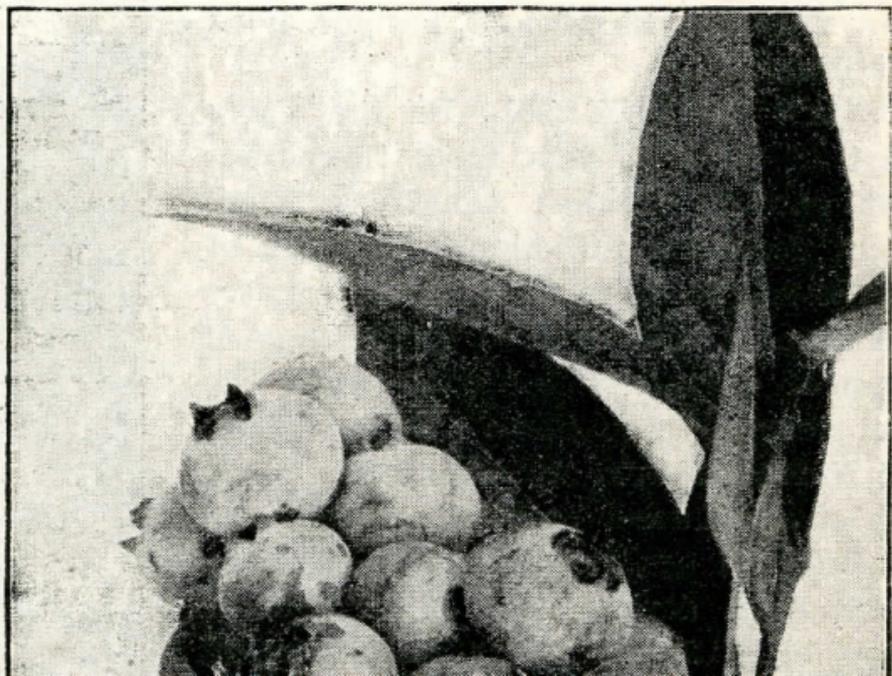
**A WOMAN'S WORK.**—At the last meeting of the New Jersey State Horticultural Society Miss Elizabeth C. White of New Lisbon made a full statement of her work with blueberries. It is one of the most interesting stories of horticultural development ever given in this country. We are told that if one is to do great work in any line, one must be born and trained for it, for there are few cases of accident in great achievement. The truth of this seems to be demonstrated in the case of Miss White. It seems that cranberry and blueberry plants, while dissimilar in habit (one a trailing vine, the other a tall bush) belong to the same botanical family. Miss

White may be called a cranberry grower by inheritance. More than 60 years ago her grandfather, James A. Fenwick, began experimenting with cultivating cranberries. He was one of the pioneers in this work of taming the cranberry and putting it in harness. At the time of Mr. Fenwick's death in 1882 he had developed 40 acres of cranberries. The care of them fell to Miss White's father, Joseph J. White, who has carried on Mr. Fenwick's work until he has now the largest bog in the world.

**FATHER AND DAUGHTER.**—It is no accident that the granddaughter of this pioneer in cranberry culture was led to adopt another wildling and lay the foundation for what promises to be an even greater business than cranberry growing. Miss White became a comrade to her father. They were together at the bog whenever possible. The girl came to know all the details of the cranberry culture, and took an active part in the business. Among other things this gave her a wide and friendly acquaintance with the people of the "piney" country who pick cranberries, and in their season go after wild huckleberries. This acquaintance proved of great value to her later—as we shall see. Miss White says that she and her father often discussed the possibility of cultivating the swamp huckleberry. They sampled berries and went from bush to bush after various specimens. Only now and then could they find a bush with berries of good size and with the desired "peachy" flavor. The great majority of the fruit would be too sour, too flat and tasteless, or too small to be of any commercial value, so they decided that it was hardly worth while to start, especially since they did not know how to propagate new plants from desirable bushes.

**A LESSON FROM THE APPLE.**—Of course, when you come to think of it, this same thing would have been true of seedling apples. We may imagine some dreamer or wise man starting out years ago to find desirable varieties with which to begin apple culture. The woods of New England were full of seedling trees, but thousands must be tested and tried before Baldwin or Rhode Island Greening were found by chance. Evidently the wild blueberry varied as greatly in character and habit as the seedling apple trees scattered through fields and woods. Profitable cultivation was possible only through finding the best plants and learning how to propagate from them. As Miss White says—when the best huckleberry bush among several million has been located in some Jersey swamp and transplanted the fruit becomes the aristocratic blueberry.

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## NEW-YORKER

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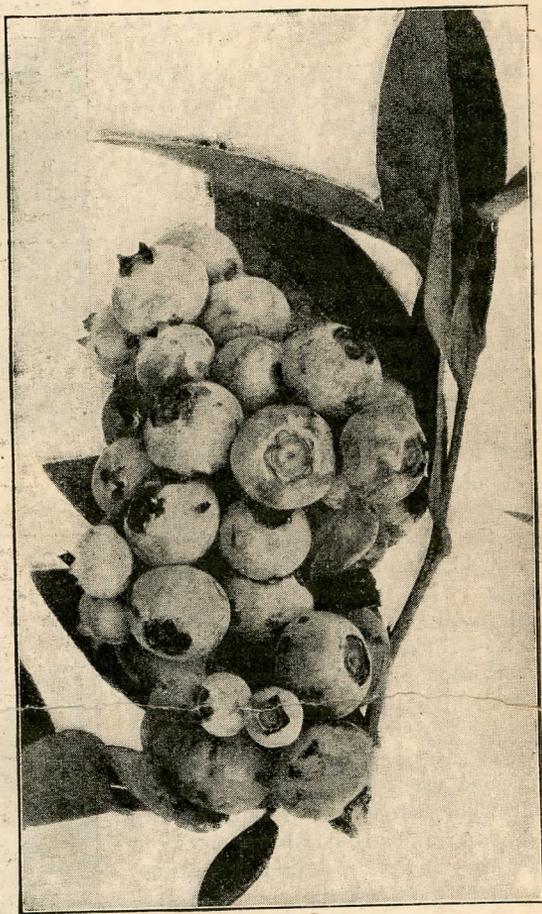
(Continued from page 314)

while in alkaline waters it is deposited and the water becomes white. Never before had I known that associated with the roots of blueberry, cranberry and most other plants which grow in acid soils is a symbiotic fungus which in some still unexplained way assists these plants in obtaining the nitrogen necessary for their growth.

The result was that Miss White and her father offered to co-operate with the Department at Washington, and finally land at Whitesbog was rented for testing purposes.

**THE SEARCH FOR ANCESTORS.**—First of all it was necessary to find some very superior plants for propagating. So they set about it as in old times they would have employed some one familiar with the wild fields and woods to hunt for a Bartlett pear or a Baldwin apple. And here Miss White made use of her friends, the berry pickers. These people knew the swamps and wild places, and in the course of a day's picking they visit thousands of plants. If they could be interested, it would be easy for them to mark some particularly fine <sup>fresh</sup> and go to it later when needed. We shall tell how this was done and what came from it next week. At Fig. 121, on page 314, you may see one cluster of superior fruit, exact size. We firmly believe that this is the beginning of a great business which is to give the world a new supply of a most delicious fruit and provide a profitable crop for soils and sections now thought quite unprofitable.

(To be continued.)



One of the Cultivated Blueberries. Fig. 121

entirely new view of the berry and its needs. As she says:

Never before had I known that the soil of our bogs was acid, as was the water of our streams, that it was this which made our bog water brown, as in acid water the humus is held in solution (Continued on page 330.)