

## About Florida Oranges




(excerpts from *Palmetto Leaves* pages 247-256)

*The book, Palmetto Leaves, was published in 1872. The author, Harriet Beecher Stowe, was living in Mandarin, Florida (near Jacksonville).*

**A** gentleman propounds to us the following inquiry: “Apart from the danger from frosts, what is the prospect of certainty in the orange-crop? Is it a steady one?”

We have made diligent inquiry from old, experienced cultivators, and from those who have collected the traditions of orange-growing; and the result seems to be, that, apart from the danger of frost, the orange-crop is the most steady and certain of any known fruit.

In regard to our own grove, consisting of a hundred and fifteen trees on an acre and a half of ground, we find that there has been an average crop matured of sixty thousand a year for each of the five years we have had it. Two years the crop was lost through sudden frost coming after it was fully perfected; but these two years are the only ones since 1835 when a crop has been lost or damaged through frost.



Our friend inquires with regard to the orange-insect. This was an epidemic which prevailed some fifteen or twenty years ago, destroying the orange-trees as the canker-worms did the apple-trees. It was a variety of the scale-bug; but nothing has been seen of it in an epidemic form for many years, and growers now have no apprehensions from this source.

But what a bouquet of sweets is an orange-tree! Merely as a flowering-tree it is worth having, if for nothing else. We call the time of their budding the week of pearls. How beautiful, how almost miraculous, the leaping-forth of these pearls to gem the green leaves! The fragrance has a stimulating effect on our nerves, —a sort of dreamy intoxication. The air, now, is full of it. Under the tree the white shell-petals drift, bearing perfume.

But, not to lose our way in poetic raptures, we return to statistics drawn from a recent conversation with our practical neighbor. He has three trees in his grounds, which this year have each borne five thousand oranges.

He stated that he had had reports from two men whom he named, who had each gathered ten thousand from a single tree. He appeared to think it a credible story, though a very remarkable yield.

The orange can be got from seed. Our neighbor's trees, the largest and finest in Mandarin, are seedlings. Like ours, they were frozen down in 1835, and subsequently almost destroyed by the orange-insect; but now they are stately, majestic trees of wonderful beauty.