

The Blossoming Environs

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With the coming of March comes soon again the blossoming of the peach orchards in the Sandhills. This year the orchards will be much greater in acreage than ever before, for this season thousands of new trees will blossom for the first time. This spring will see the first fruition of those trees that were planted three or four years ago, and they will add hundreds of acres to the floral display of the sandy ridges.

A blossoming peach orchard is one of the most spectacular exhibits of Nature, for it is so emphatic in its whole character. The Sandhills orchard is cultivated with such care that its trees are of one size, regularly planted, clean between the rows either way, a study in geometry in the entire field, for each tree is in its particular place in the square, the triangle, or whatever form you use as a comparison, each is as high as the other, with a spread of limb the same as the other, precise and alike throughout the whole plantation. And each comes into blossom along with all the rest, an endless, unbroken extent of delicate flowers of a dainty color, and all in a vast unit look like a blanket thrown over creation. Under the trees is the clean, white sand, above is the brown of the trunk, the opening green of the coming leaves, and the dense pink of the mass of blossoms.

Orchard after orchard is encountered on almost any ridge road the traveler is disposed to follow as the blossoms begin to come, and the picture this year will surpass anything of the kind that has yet been shown. Next year the acreage will be bigger, and as more trees have been planted this winter than at any previous time it is interesting to look ahead three or four years and imagine the riot of color that will greet the visitor to the Sandhill orchard country say in about four years from this time.

Moore county is a farming region of innumerable blossom. The first crop to show flowers in considerable quantity is the peach orchard. At times in the vicinity of Pinehurst peach trees have made the mistake of coming into blossom in January, but the tree that comes out so early is always sorry, for the misplaced enthusiasm is followed by a few remarks like those of Wolsey, "Comes a frost, a killing frost and nips his root, and then he falls as I do." But this year the weather has been more favorable, and the indications are that the peaches will not be out too soon. This is important in making the crop, although it is a rare experience that the fruit is killed by frost to the extent of interfering with the crop. I can recall but one instance since I have been familiar with the Sandhills where the peach crop was really so damaged that it could be regarded as a commercial failure.

This year the peach blossoms will be one of the most magnificent sights the

Sandhills country has ever seen, and it is a profitable thing to be in the fruit belt when the trees are at their best, for such displays of flowers on such a big scale is hard to find any place at any time. The visitor who is already here can afford to stay until the trees are out, and those not here can find a great deal of pleasure in timing a visit to the Sandhill country about that period. From the middle of March to the middle of April is the time to see the trees at their most gorgeous stage. Then the roads are fine, the weather is genial, all conditions are tempting, and the forests are beginning to show their soft green, and the woods flowers are abundant. The arbutus and the pixsie moss, which whiten the forests with their dainty blossoms, are at their height, or if the season is advanced, they may be pretty well gone, for both of them are early arrivals.

From the opening of the arbutus to the last gentian blossoms along about Christmas the Sandhills are a continuation of flowers in great quantities. Violets, lupines, honeysuckle, pinks, and through a long list the spring and summer flowers follow each other until the cotton blossom opens, and there is a flower that begins with the first of July and follows until frosts finally check its exuberance. A cotton field is always worth seeing, but unfortunately for the tourist it is a summer flower show, not of spring. But the hundreds of acres of cotton, in blossom during a third of the year, and white with cotton for a yet later portion of the year, give the peach orchard a hard chase. Helping to supplement both of them is the tobacco blossom, a showy flower that is not so abundant, as the tobacco crop does not depend on the fruit for its market value but on the leaf. So the blossom is not encouraged, and it is a straggler instead of a factor. Nevertheless the tobacco field in blossom is to be remembered by the lover of flowers. So is the cow pea field, which is another prominent factor in Sandhills farm life. And all through the spring, summer and fall woods and fields are covered with one array of flowers after another on the same generous scale. From now on rural North Carolina is a mighty pleasing place to see.

R. F. Foster, author of "Foster on Auction," and some forty odd books on all sorts of card games, who is card editor of the *New York Tribune*, and of *Vanity Fair*, will be at the Carolina on the 20th. For the past three winters Mr. Foster has been at the Bellevue, at Belleair, Florida, giving bridge lessons. As he is also something of a golfer, being a member of five golf clubs, and vice-president of the New York Newspaper Men's Golf Club, he is anxious to see the famous courses at Pinehurst, and will probably stay for the remainder of the season.



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