

# Spraying Orchard, Hood River

*By Pacific Northwest Electric Railway Association*

This ca. 1930 photograph shows a Hood River orchardist and child spraying pear or apple trees. The photograph is from the Pacific Northwest Electric Railway Association collection at the Oregon Historical Society. A railroad company may have used this image to promote immigration into the Hood River Valley.

In the early 20th century, an increasing number of American farmers began to use chemical sprays against fungal diseases and insects. One of the earlier commercial products was Paris green, an arsenic-laced pigment that had previously been marketed as paint.

In Oregon, the state board of horticulture encouraged orchardists to use a variety of arsenic and copper solutions, lead arsenate, and lime sulfur to prevent damage from codling moths, aphids, pear fruit worms, red spider mites, and fungal canker diseases. In the 1920s, people became aware of the health dangers from arsenic and lead arsenate residues. European countries negotiated international trade regulations limiting the allowable amount of chemicals residue on fruit and vegetable exports. In Oregon, the board of horticulture responded by requiring farmers to clean their export products in hydrochloric acid.

By the 1940s, chemists developed a number of synthetic organic pesticides, including dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT). In 1962, Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring* raised awareness about the damaging effects of DDT and other pesticides to humans and the environment. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency banned DDT in 1972.

Written by Kathy Tucker, © Oregon Historical Society, 2002.

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