

REPORT ON THE SUITABILITY OF THE SOILS OF LISLE
FOR FRUIT GROWING.

Lisle was the centre of gold mining 50 years ago. Today it is deserted by all save a few timber-getters, who occasionally give a little time to prospecting, and a few daily farmers. From the alluvial and detrital deposits almost £1,000,000 worth of gold has been removed but the prospects of further discoveries are not bright. The gold is of secondary origin, therefore, it is futile to search for its source in the immediate neighbourhood. All the rich beds have been worked out. The area is of no further interest to the Mines Department as regards its gold deposits.

The following table of analyses of the soils conveys an idea as to their nature and suitability for the growth of fruits:-

	Silica	Tenour Oxide	Ferric Oxide	Alu- mina	Lime	Mag- nesia	Soda	Pot- assa
Syenite granite	61.60	2.97	7.00	14.71	4.89	2.68	4.05	1.72
" "	65.80	-	6.29	17.91	4.00	1.66	2.65	2.59
Felspar Por- phyry	49.80	-	2.57	33.63		1.09	2.12	5.08
Argillaceous Sandstone	64.10		7.87	19.13		1.81	1.05	4.09

The Phosphoric Acid content has not been determined, but it should be considerable because apatite (phosphate of lime) is one of the component minerals of the syenite granite. The analyses clearly show that the soils contain all the elements necessary for plant food.

Climatic conditions are favourable, and the valley floor, being over 1000 feet below the rim of the basin, is sheltered from heavy winds.

From the foregoing it is seen that all the conditions combine to make this area suitable for the culture of fruits. During the period of the Lisle is a pear-shaped basin occupied by soft decomposed syenite granite and is surrounded by sharp ridges of slate, tuff, and sandstone.

The basin is three miles long and two miles in mid-width tapering to a point at the south end. Lisle Creek which is responsible for the corrosion of the valley floor, rises at the south-end, and discharges through a deep narrow gorge at the north-end. Numerous east and west tributaries have contributed to the shaping of the basin. By the very rapid erosion of the soft syenite granite the harder rim-rocks (volcanic ash and slate) became undermined and collapsed. These materials, now partly decomposed, in successive slips now extends to the floor of the basin almost covering the old erosion surface. The soils from the decomposed volcanic tuff and syenite granite are deep on the valley sides and bottom, and at one time supported a very heavy growth of eucalypts.

Since the removal of the forests and the cessation of gold-mining the lands have been used as pastures and for the cultivation of fruits, especially of strawberries, raspberries, currants, and other small fruits. In the gardens of the several homesteads are apple, pear, plum, quince and peach trees, all in healthy condition and heavy-bearing. Small fruits, however, appear the more flourishing and their culture offers the better prospect of success. Writer's investigation visited Furlong's property and there saw strawberries of extraordinary size and of the highest quality. For these nine pence per pound was obtained in Launceston (James Quigley purchaser) and orders were given for regular supplies.

As regards the road from Myrtlebank it is already formed and, having been cut out of rock, will require little ballast. Half a mile of road formation is necessary, however, at the Lisle end to reduce the grade of that section.

DIRECTOR OF MINES.

Mines Department,
Hobart.

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