PART V

CROPS

Major Crops

Because of the importance of dairying, poultry raising and livestock farming in King County, a major part of the cropland is used for growing feed crops. About 72 percent of the cropland in 1954 was used to grow hay and silage. Another 3 percent was used for oats and barley. Most of the feed crops are used directly on the farms and in the immediate locality to support dairy and beef cattle. In 1954 the 33,017 acres of harvested cropland were planted to the following crops listed in order of acreage importance: hay and silage, commercial vegetables, small grains (oats and barley), tree fruits and berries.

Crop Trends

The crop history of any farming region reflects economic changes to a large degree. A number of changes are apparent in the emphasis and acreages King County farmers have given to leading crops. These show the influence of

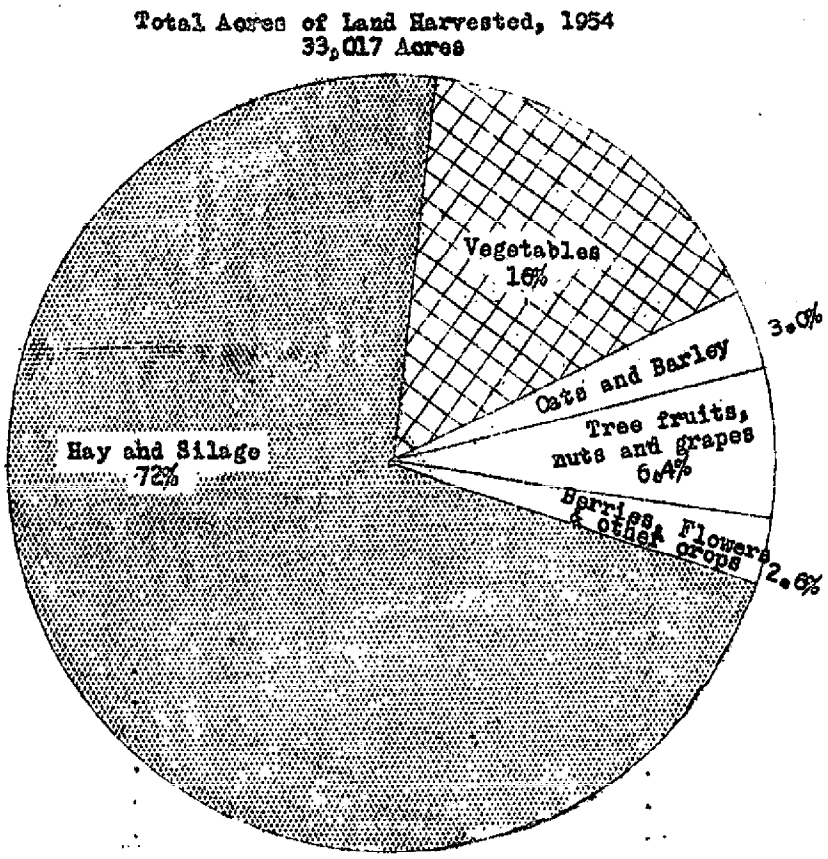

Figure 9.- Percent of Total Cropland in Leading Crops
King County, 1954.
(Based on U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1954)

new market outlets and improved rail and truck transportation. They also show the influence of the mechanization of agriculture and its consequent decrease in horses which formerly consumed large amounts of grain and hay. Changes in the crop patterns also result from farmers experiments with various crops and types of farming for specific markets.

Since 1939 there have been several general trends in the crop program of King County farmers. The acreage in hay crops has remained stable, being 23,460 acres in 1939 and 23,800 acres in 1954. The hay acreage has increased slightly, however, since 1949 when it was at a low of 22,800. The major types of hay--clover and timothy--were at a peak of 11,000 acres in 1939 and low of 8,900 in 1955. Alfalfa was at a high of 610 acres in 1941 and decreased to 430 in 1954. There has been a sizable decrease in the acreage of oats and other small grains cut for hay. Oat and grain hay amounted to only 1,000 acres in 1954 compared with 2,900 acres in 1949. Large increases have occurred in grass and other hay cut for silage. In 1949 there were 2,950 acres of silage harvested compared with 6,420 in 1954. The acreage in commercial vegetables has dropped from 6,780 acres to 5,330 between 1949 and 1954. Berry growing is at about the same acreage as in 1939, but raspberries, blackberries and loganberries are down, while strawberries, blueberries and currants are higher. All land in crops has decreased since 1939, according to the Census. In 1939 there were 41,077 acres harvested for crops compared to 33,200 in 1954. Much former cropland has recently gone into permanent pastures, woodlots, residential and industrial properties.

Table 16.- Clover-Timothy Hay and Alfalfa Hay
Acreage, Yield and Production
King County, 1939-1955

Year	Clover and Timothy Hay			Alfalfa Hay		
	Acreage (acres)	Yield (tons per acre)	Production (tons)	Acreage (acres)	Yield (tons per acre)	Production (tons)
1939	11,000	2.1	23,100	540	2.5	1,330
1940	9,400	2.2	21,100	580	3.1	1,800
1941	10,200	2.1	21,600	610	3.0	1,830
1942	10,700	2.7	28,700	550	4.0	2,200
1943	10,600	2.0	21,400	530	2.9	1,530
1944	9,800	2.2	21,600	430	3.0	1,300
1945	9,700	1.9	18,900	420	2.6	1,100
1946	9,500	2.1	19,500	430	2.6	1,100
1947	8,900	2.1	18,600	520	2.5	1,300
1948	9,500	2.2	20,800	560	2.9	1,600
1949	9,600	1.8	17,300	580	2.2	1,300
1950	9,600	2.1	20,200	490	2.7	1,300
1951	10,200	1.6	16,300	500	2.6	1,300
1952	10,900	2.2	24,000	500	3.0	1,500
1953	10,000	1.6	16,000	460	2.7	1,260
1954	9,100	2.0	18,200	430	2.0	860
1955	8,900	2.4	21,600	460	2.0	920

Source: U.S. Dept. of Agric. AMS, Estimates Division, State of Washington, 1939-1955.

Hay and Silage Crops

For many years the most important crop from the acreage standpoint has been hay. All types of hay and silage have ranged between 22,000 and 23,000 acres since 1939. Clover and timothy are the most common types, generally grown in a mixture. Clover and timothy reached peaks of 11,000 acres in 1939 and 10,900 in 1952 and lows of 9,400 and 8,900 in 1940 and 1955. Oats cut green for hay are second among the hay feeds, ranging from 1,000 to 4,000 acres per year. Grass silage and wild hay have ranged between 3,000 and 6,500 acres per year. Silage making is a rapidly growing farm practice to better utilize feed crops. This is indicated by the fact that 323 farms put up silage in 1954 compared to only 170 in 1949 and 20 in 1939.

Hay crops are grown mainly on the drier upland soils and in some of the higher valley bottoms. Hay is the major crop on the numerous dairy farms, although many dairy farms do not grow enough hay to feed their cattle and must buy from neighboring farms or from surplus hay areas in eastern Washington. A small number of farms have grown alfalfa, but it has not been a successful feed crop. Alfalfa has gone down from 610 acres to 460 since 1941.

Oats, Other Small Grains and Corn

Hay and silage feed crops are supplemented by other feeds such as threshed oats, barley, wheat and some field corn. Threshed oats have declined from 1,730

Table 17.- Oats and Barley: Acreage, Yield and Production
King County, 1939-1955

Year	Oats (grain)			Barley (grain)		
	Acreage (acres)	Yield (bushels per acre)	Production (bushels)	Acreage (acres)	Yield (bushels per acre)	Production (bushels)
1939	1,730	52	89,960	110	49.0	5,390
1940	1,330	45	59,850	80	40.0	3,200
1941	1,080	53	57,240	70	38.0	2,660
1942	920	53	48,760	120	37.0	4,440
1943	640	56	35,840	100	34.0	3,400
1944	650	52	33,800	70	34.0	2,380
1945	600	46	27,600	60	35.0	2,100
1946	550	52	28,600	50	42.0	2,100
1947	520	53	27,560	40	36.0	1,440
1948	540	45	24,300	40	38.0	1,520
1949	520	53	27,560	20	40.0	800
1950	550	49	26,950	40	45.0	1,800
1951	800	48	38,400	50	45.0	2,250
1952	770	56	43,120	70	44.0	3,080
1953	820	54	44,280	90	48.0	4,320
1954	910	44	40,040	100	54.0	5,400
1955	550	53	29,150	110	50.0	5,500

Source: U.S. Dept. of Agric., AMS, Estimates Division, State of Washington, 1939-1955.

Table 18.- Wheat and Field Corn: Acreage, Yield and Production King County, 1939-1955.

Year	All Wheat			Field Corn		
	Acreage (acres)	Yield (bushels per acre)	Production (bushels)	Acreage (acres)	Yield (bushels per acre)	Production (bushels)
1939	170	39.6	6,730	60	30.0	1,800
1940	250	20.0	5,000	50	32.0	1,600
1941	150	40.0	6,000	40	30.0	1,200
1942	80	50.0	4,000	40	29.5	1,180
1943	90	33.3	3,000	30	10.0	300
1944	50	44.2	2,210	20	17.0	340
1945	50	30.2	1,510	30	27.0	810
1946	70	40.0	2,800	30	27.0	810
1947	120	33.2	3,980	20	20.0	400
1948	80	31.8	2,540	10	23.0	230
1949	40	24.5	980	20	22.5	450
1950	10	29.0	290	10	20.0	200
1951	--	--	--	10	16.0	160
1952	--	--	--	10	24.0	240
1953	--	--	--	20	23.0	460
1954	--	--	--	20	30.5	610
1955	--	--	--	20	27.0	540

Source: U.S.D.A., AMS, Agric. Estimated Division State of Washington

acres in 1939 to 550 in 1955. Barley has varied from 20 acres in 1949 to 110 acres in 1955. Wheat, never an important cash crop in King County, has practically been abandoned in recent years. Field corn is another livestock and poultry feed which has been grown on 10 to 60 acres per year. Damp climatic conditions and the high value of land for more profitable vegetable and berry crops have resulted in a general decline of threshed grain and field corn crops. Less than 20 farms had grain combines in 1954. Only about 40,000 bushels of oats and 5,400 bushels of barley were threshed in the 1954 crop year. The minor acreage of field corn was for silage.

Vegetables

Low river bottom valleys of King County close to Seattle and Tacoma contain one of the major vegetable-growing regions of the state. King ranked fifth among Washington counties in commercial vegetable acreage in 1954. It was second to Skagit County in western Washington. In the value of farm-sold vegetables, however, King County was second to Yakima in the state. Sales to nearby urban wholesale and retail markets as well as to processors bring high cash returns to the vegetable growers. In 1954 there were about 5,330 acres in intensive, commercial vegetable crops. The Kent-Auburn area in the Green River Valley is one of the most intensive vegetable districts in the state. In all King County about 300 farms specialize in commercial vegetables; in 1954 they grossed $2,086,000 in sales.

Table 19.- Vegetable Crops: Sweet Corn, Cauliflower, Cucumbers and Lettuce
King County, 1940-1955

Year	Sweet Corn 1/		Cauliflower		Cucumbers 1/		Lettuce	
	Acres	Prod. (tons)	Acres	Prod. (tons)	Acres	Prod. (tons)	Acres	Prod. (tons)
1940	--	--	540	4,200	--	--	1,250	10,200
1941	--	--	585	5,435	--	--	1,450	10,000
1942	--	--	240	1,750	--	--	1,250	8,500
1943	--	--	270	2,490	--	--	950	6,000
1944	--	--	235	1,740	--	--	800	6,500
1945	--	--	195	1,675	--	--	800	6,000
1946	--	--	210	1,930	--	--	900	6,750
1947	--	--	300	2,350	--	--	1,050	8,000
1948	800	4,000	400	2,950	250	850	980	8,300
1949	600	1,700	450	3,480	235	945	1,000	8,550
1950	350	1,750	325	2,200	165	830	925	8,900
1951	580	2,700	360	2,700	200	900	825	9,300
1952	750	4,500	350	3,600	125	600	750	9,600
1953	550	2,875	350	4,100	300	1,100	825	9,350
1954	650	2,600	285	2,700	175	700	825	8,900
1955	450	1,800	325	3,700	200	900	905	10,800

1/ Not available prior to 1948.

Source: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, AMS, Agric. Estimates Division, State of Washington.

Table 20.- Vegetable Crops: Green Peas, Broccoli, Cabbage and Carrots
King County, 1940-1955

Year	Green Peas (Fresh)		Broccoli		Cabbage		Carrots	
	Acres	Prod. (tons)	Acres	Prod. (tons)	Acres	Prod. (tons)	Acres	Prod. (tons)
1940	1,200	3,450	--	--	680	15,920	325	2,900
1941	1,000	3,600	--	--	725	8,575	330	3,415
1942	585	1,400	--	--	580	4,960	375	3,895
1943	550	2,200	260	750	635	6,385	550	6,150
1944	325	1,200	100	250	600	3,700	465	5,025
1945	300	875	100	300	650	6,000	450	4,500
1946	375	1,100	200	750	590	6,720	500	4,200
1947	450	1,750	150	450	470	5,000	600	4,800
1948	450	1,500	575	1,500	475	5,050	375	3,850
1949	250	1,150	1,100	2,700	525	5,400	225	2,300
1950	230	950	1,200	3,000	535	5,025	400	5,500
1951	275	650	790	2,000	500	5,000	350	4,200
1952	175	680	890	2,600	535	4,800	300	3,700
1953	170	725	960	2,500	645	5,550	250	2,900
1954	150	560	400	910	550	5,150	250	2,400
1955	155	700	385	1,000	325	2,710	230	3,500

Source: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, AMS, Agric. Estimates Division, State of Washington

Acreages in commercial vegetables vary from year to year. Contracts between growers and processors may result in considerable change. Fresh market competition with California produce may also result in fluctuating acreages of truck crops. In 1955 commercial production in King County was estimated to include the following listed in order of acres: snap beans (1,100), lettuce (905), sweet corn (450), broccoli (385), cabbage (325), cauliflower (325), rhubarb (280), celery (240), carrots (230), spinach (205), cucumbers (200), green peas (155) and tomatoes (45).

Table 21.- Vegetable Crops: Rhubarb and Spinach King County, 1940-1955

Year	Rhubarb (Field) 1/		Spinach	
	Acres	Prod. (tons)	Acres	Prod. (tons)
1940	--	--	440	1,710
1941	--	--	440	1,980
1942	--	--	440	2,050
1943	--	--	620	2,870
1944	--	--	520	2,110
1945	--	--	415	1,850
1946	--	--	430	1,575
1947	--	--	380	1,605
1948	50	100	355	1,535
1949	70	150	325	1,675
1950	125	250	345	1,865
1951	185	370	575	3,250
1952	225	450	425	2,305
1953	260	520	410	2,300
1954	280	565	275	1,300
1955	280	850	205	1,075

1/ Not available prior to 1948.

Snap beans are a specialty crop for which King County is noted. This valuable cash crop is grown principally on the Puget and Puyallup loam soils and canned and frozen in the Green Valley district around Kent and Auburn. King County leads by far all other counties of Washington in the Bluelake variety of green snap beans. In recent censuses King has been among the leading 100 counties of the nation in green beans. The acreage and production has varied from a peak of 2,100 acres and 8,400 tons in 1949 to a low of 1,100 acres and 4,000 tons in 1955.

Cauliflower and broccoli for fresh market and freezing have become more important in recent years. In 1955 King County led the state in cauliflower with 325 acres. It was third in broccoli with 385 acres. Celery and carrots are two other important crops. In 1955 King County produced over two-thirds of the celery grown in Washington and one-sixth of the carrots. Celery was at a peak of 510 acres in 1946 but has since dropped to between 200 and 300 acres per year.

Berries

King is the sixth most important berry growing county of Washington. It is also among America's 100 leading strawberry counties. All types of cane, bush and strawberries covered about 1,325 acres in 1955. Freeze damage in 1950 and 1955 resulted in some variation in acreage and type of berries. Interest in berry growing has declined slightly since 1939 when there were about 1,600 acres in all types. Strawberries, currants and blueberries have been expanded in acreage, while the acreage in raspberries, loganberries and blackberries has declined.

Berries are grown on upland and alluvial bottom soils and tend to be concentrated in a few areas such as the middle-Snoqualmie Valley, Vashon Island, and the upland parts of the Samamish and Green River Valleys. Vashon Island

Table 22.- Berry Crops: Strawberries, Raspberries and Blackberries
King County, 1940-1955.

Year	Strawberries		Raspberries (Red)		Tame Blackberries	
	Acres	Tons	Acres	Tons	Acres	Tons
1940	400	420	450	650	200	800
1941	450	550	400	550	250	750
1942	350	390	400	600	290	1,000
1943	250	325	375	450	275	900
1944	175	160	375	510	225	575
1945	170	300	250	400	150	375
1946	125	250	250	500	125	425
1947	275	525	300	725	100	450
1948	375	825	325	800	120	525
1949	425	900	350	750	100	200
1950	375	800	300	450	100	25 1/
1951	700	1,050	200	300	90	400
1952	725	1,200	170	510	150	650
1953	800	1,600	210	670	140	750
1954	450	1,050	275	550	170	390
1955	425	950	275	650	190	550

1/ Heavy frost damage.

Source: U.S. Dept. of Agric., AMS, Agric. Estimates Division, State of Washington.

Table 23.- Berry Crops: Currants, Loganberries and Blueberries
King County, 1940-1955

Year	Currants		Loganberries		Blueberries	
	Acres	Tons	Acres	Tons	Acres	Tons
1940	150	250	180	380	2	3
1941	160	280	155	265	2	2
1942	175	500	200	400	2	4
1943	200	510	200	425	5	10
1944	125	315	180	275	7	10
1945	45	90	120	200	20	22
1946	200	610	125	200	20	20
1947	115	340	100	200	25	40
1948	300	680	150	300	27	35
1949	270	520	140	180	35	50
1950	125	150	95	95	65	75
1951	150	355	30	50	160	180
1952	150	460	30	60	170	275
1953	170	600	30	70	175	190
1954	175	295	60	75	200	325
1955	175	410	60	67	200	280

Source: U.S. Dept. of Agric., AMS, Agric. Estimates Division, State of Washington.

is noted as the state's most specialized currant growing area. Blueberries are concentrated on some muck soils adjacent to Lake Washington near Kirkland and Bellevue. King leads all other Washington counties in currants (175 acres) and gooseberries (20 acres). A large part of King County berries move to fresh markets in Seattle. Led by strawberries, the total off-farm sales of the berry crops gross about $1,000,000 in an average year. Most of the berry crops are grown on small farms but there are a few larger operations on Vashon Island and in the Snoqualmie and Green River Valleys which employ seasonal picking labor.

Nursery and Greenhouse Products: Flowers, Bulbs, and Plants

King County leads the state in flowers, bulbs, plants, seeds, ornamentals, vegetable plants, mushrooms and other specialties grown in nurseries, greenhouses and under intensive cultivation in fields. In recent censuses it has been among the leading 50 counties of the nation in this type of farming. In 1954 about 542 acres of land and 1,606,414 square feet of greenhouse space were devoted to these and allied products. There is more greenhouse space in King than in any other Washington county. Production is located on 200 farms mainly close to the Seattle market. These products brought a total cash return of $2,401,587 to growers in King County in 1954. The industry accounted for over 43 percent of the total value of all crops sold in the county, according to the 1954 Census of Agriculture.

Table 24.- Horticultural Specialties: Nursery Products, Greenhouse Products, Flowers, Plants, Bulbs, Seeds, Mushrooms, and other Special Plants.
King County, 1939-1954

Census Year	Nursery Products (shrubs, trees and ornamentals)		Flowers and flowering plants, bulbs and seeds; Vegetables, vegetable seeds, plants, mushrooms grown in fields & under glass for sale.		
	Acres Planted	Sales from Nurseries	Acres in open fields	Greenhouse space (square feet under glass)	Sales from farms during the year
1939	313	$185,128	287	1,617,593	$ 692,427
1944 1/	--	--	--	--	--
1949	231	$688,673	216	1,770,362	$1,889,668
1954	376	$737,112	166	1,606,414	$1,664,475

1/ No Census data are available for 1944.

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture.

Flowers, vegetable plants, and other bedded and potted plants and bulbs lead in value. A large volume of commercial cut flowers and potted plants enter the Seattle market. There were about 130 farms growing flowers under glass in 1954. Flower-growing in open fields has dropped off by over 100 acres since 1939. Only 80 farms were growing flowers in fields in 1954 compared to 168 in 1949.

Nursery products show a gain in acreage, growers and sale value during the last 15 years. A large amount of residential building and landscaping in the greater Seattle metropolitan area has favored an increased plant, shrub and tree

nursery industry. There were 103 nurseries in 1954 compared to 92 in 1949. The acreage was one-seventh greater and total sales were up four times over 1939 census figures.

Tree Fruits and Filberts

Tree fruits are a minor crop of King County, but the 2,100 acres of orchards is the second largest fruit acreage in western Washington. West of the Cascades King is exceeded only by Clark County in all tree fruits and nuts. King is the outstanding county in the state in numbers of sour cherry trees and in production. Nearly one-fifth of the farms had orchards with more than 20 trees in 1954. Except for cherries most of the orchards are non-commercial and are kept for local use and some roadside-stand marketing. Most valuable tree fruit crop is sour cherries; a crop of 2,248,430 pounds or 63 percent of the state production was harvested in 1954. A large volume of the sour cherries are canned and packed in the Kent-Auburn area.

The number of fruit and nut trees of all ages on all King County farms in 1954 was: sour cherries (55,943), apples (22,386), peaches (17,311), filberts (13,925), pears (4,198), sweet cherries (4,024), plums and prunes (13,961), walnuts (669), and apricots (263). Census enumerations since 1935 indicate a decrease in all fruit trees and removal or abandonment of several hundred acres of small-farm orchards. Many orchards have been removed from lands suited for growing more profitable vegetable and berry crops. Other orchards have gone into suburban residential property. Freezing weather in 1950 and in 1955 killed numerous filbert orchards which have not been replaced. In general, western Washington tree fruits are unable to compete in the market with Yakima County and other eastern Washington orchard areas.

King leads all Washington counties in number of sour cherry trees. It ranked thirtieth in cherries among all U.S. counties in 1954. Probably the most important area is just to the east of Renton, Kent and Auburn, and southeast of Seattle. Ninety-eight percent of the trees in the county in 1949 were sour cherry trees. Fifty-four percent of the 90,000 sour cherry trees standing at the time of the fruit tree survey had been planted in the 1930's. Plantings in the 1920's comprised 29 percent of the total, and those over 28 years old (planted by 1920) were only 4 percent of all the trees. Less than 4,000 trees standing in 1949 were planted in the 3 years 1946-48 inclusive.

Table 25.- Cherries: Trees of Bearing Age and Production
King County, 1890-1955

Year	Bearing Trees	Year	Production of cherries (tons)
1890	891	1889	11
1900	15,928	1899	84
1910	15,509	1909	470
1920	26,296	1919	635
1930	63,385	1929	2,275
1940	105,274	1939	2,087
1950	80,738	1949	574
1955	45,600	1954	1,128

Source: Washington Tree Fruits, Washington Crop and Livestock Reporting Service, USDA and Wash. State Dept. of Agriculture, 1952.

King County cherry tree plantings and production were at peak levels in the 1930-1940 decade. The number of bearing trees lowered to about 45,000 and yearly production was about 1,100 tons in 1955.

The interest in commercial cherry growing in King County has been increasing slightly in recent years, according to an analysis by the Washington Crop and Livestock Reporting Service. A tree survey of 1948-1949 by this agency showed a trend of revived interest in new plantings of sour cherries beginning in 1947. However, the removal of older trees continues and actually in 1954 there were 56,000 sour cherry trees in King County orchards compared to 75,500 enumerated in 1949. The 1949 enumeration, however, counted all cherry trees, whereas the 1954 Census did not tabulate cherry trees outside of orchards with twenty or more trees. Numerous farms have a few cherry trees for home use.

Table 26.- Cherries: Number of Trees By Variety and By Year of Planting King County, 1949.

Year or Period	Number of Sweet Cherry Trees Planted	Number of Sour Cherry Trees Planted
1920 or before	110	3,900
1930-1921	330	26,300
1935-1931	630	37,600
1940-1946	240	11,230
1941	--	1,710
1942	10	5,410
1943	--	--
1944	20	20
1945	--	--
1946	10	160
1947	10	1,870
1948	20	2,020
Total trees planted	1,380	90,220

Source: Washington Tree Fruits, Washington Crop and Livestock Reporting Service, USDA and Washington State Dept. of Agric., Cooperating, 1952.