

The 8,000 young trees being raised in the Phosmico nursery will plant more than 100-acres of grove.

INTEREST IN CITRUS GROWING INCREASES

The interest in reclaimed land for citrus grove sites is increasing rapidly since initial experimental work is complete, and it has been shown that profitable yields can result from such plantings.

The largest citrus grower among the phosphate companies is now International Minerals & Chemical Corp., with 2,000 acres in citrus cultivation, but not necessarily on reclaimed land.

One-third of International Minerals' large fruit acreage is already producing, and it is expected that the balance will be bearing fruit within two to five years.

Future plans by International Minerals call for additional citrus plantings on reclaimed land. As a result of a special study conducted by its staff, IMC saves mature trees from land assigned for mining, severely cuts the trees back, and then transplants them to reclaimed land. In addition to saving the trees, experience shows that the trees bear fruit much quicker than nursery stock.

International Minerals says that all of its producing groves are yielding well above the state average of 200 or more boxes of oranges per acre.

VARIETY OF COVER CROPS EVALUATED

IMC's most extensive reclamation project has as its site the 1,000-acre Achan tract on which reclamation has been completed. Most of the area was occupied by settling areas and debris piles, bounded by Highway 37 on the east and State 640 on the south. A triangular area at the intersection of these two roads is being left as a possible wayside park location.

Of the total acreage available about 120 acres of the higher and best drained ground are being reserved for citrus, with some 80-acres to be planted in 1967.

Both slash and sand pines are being planted with 69 acres being combined pasture and pine land. Another 35 acres are being planted exclusively to pines. One planting of sand pines is for Christmas trees.

Another 180 acres will be planted with Argentina bahia, and Pangola grasses for pastures.

Irrigation for the groves will be with pump and power units salvaged from an old grove, with the water being taken from the old Achan well.

Portions of the Achan tract, during reclamation, have been leased for water-melon crops.

First step toward the reclamation, after the Achan washer was closed in 1961 and moved to its present location, was the digging of six miles of ditches to begin draining the settling areas.

The Achan reclamation project is one of several where phosphate companies have carried land full-circle through mining, as well as use as an active settling area, removal from settling systems, reclamation, and return to active use for other purposes.

Continental Oil Co. planted 110 acres of citrus trees during the 1965-1966 season, and now has 115 acres planted on reclaimed land. Conoco's citrus plantings will continue as suitable grove land is developed and the economics of citrus growing remains sound.

Agrico Chemical Co. has recently reclaimed an old settling area comprising 400 acres. This is now leased to local truck farmers, and due to the high level of fertility, this crop land has proven very successful.

W. R. Grace & Co. has profited so well with its citrus crops that it has scheduled fruit-tree plantings of 120 acres annually for the next five years, and much of it will be located on reclaimed land. It already operates an additional 150-175 acres which consist largely of grapefruit plantings.

Mobil is also experimenting with other crops to determine how they will grow in reclaimed soil. All of this experimental work is being carried out in the Phosmico reclamation area, with 12 acres planted in peaches and 1½ acres in blackberries.

Because of the universal settling pond problems, Mobil's experience with cover crops should be of interest to many mine managers. This company now has 100 acres of pasture on old waste colloidal clay areas with bahia, Argentina bahia, Pensacola bahia, and Aeschynomene cover. In addition, three acres have been designated for planting with Okinawa lespedeza, buffelgrass, signalgrass, arb peanuts and hemarthria atlissima grass and legume. Although it is too early to say which is the most satisfactory cover, tests made by mining companies outside Florida indicate that buffelgrass is a suitable cover crop.