

Joseph Oskamp

January 22, 1888 — May 12, 1971

Joseph Oskamp was born and reared on a farm near Cincinnati, Ohio, the son of Joseph A. and Elizabeth (Stall) Oskamp. He attended high school in Kansas City, Missouri, and received the B.S. degree from the University of Missouri in February, 1912.

Following graduation at the University of Missouri, he served at Purdue University as assistant in horticulture in 1912-13, research assistant in Pomology from 1914 to 1916, and associate in pomology from 1917 to 1920. During this period his efforts were devoted to research in the area of orchard culture. His early publications showed him to be one of the first Workers in his field to recognize the value of field plot technique, emphasizing replication of treatments and statistical analysis of data.

In 1920 he was appointed horticulturist at the Missouri State Fruit Experiment Station, Mountain Grove. He held this position for one year before coming to Cornell in 1921 as extension professor to begin a successful career in pomology extension and research. Professor Oskamp was an outstanding extension teacher who enjoyed the respect of fruit growers. He Possessed a thorough knowledge of the scientific and practical aspects of fruit growing and blended them together in an admirable way. He freely shared his experiences and knowledge with co-workers and inspired them with his enthusiasm and good judgment.

Professor Oskamp was a charter member of the Cornell Extension Club and a regular attendant at its monthly meetings. His main interest in the activities of this group was the improvement in communications between extension and the farmer. His efforts in this area benefited the total extension program.

During the 1930s Professor Oskamp gave much attention to studies correlating fruit tree performance with the physical properties of the soil profile. This research was conducted in all the major fruit areas of New York State and included all the soil types on which commercial orchards existed. The results clearly emphasized the importance of soil aeration, soil depth, and moisture holding capacity in obtaining maximum performance of Perennial fruit plants. This work stresses the fact that the root system must inhabit a favorable environment if the tree top is to perform satisfactorily. Complete reports of these studies are recorded in eight Cornell Experiment

Station bulletins and four research papers published in the Proceedings of the American Society for Horticultural Science. This work has served as a technical basis for the orchard location service offered by pomology extension

during the past thirty years and has provided growers the opportunity to locate new plantings on only the most suitable soils. It has proven to be a major contribution in obtaining consistently high yields and keeping the state's fruit industry in a competitive position

As his work on fruit soils developed, Professor Oskamp participated in the department's special topics course designed for senior majors and graduate students. His part of the course was confined to fruit soils and nutrition. He conducted it as a seminar, assigning each student topics for discussion. Serving as referee, Professor Oskamp brought forth strong interest and competition within the group.

Because of a chronic illness, Professor Oskamp chose retirement in 1940. During his active career he authored or coauthored eighty-four extension and research publications on fruit growing and related subjects. His talks before the New York State Horticultural Society, recorded in the annual proceedings of the society, are distinctive in their conversion of detailed research data into practical suggestions. Large framed, with a deep voice and a slow but precise delivery, he spoke with a dry sense of humor that older fruit growers well remember. His work approached a passion. With little consideration for time or fatigue, he performed his extension and research with zest and vigor.

He was a member of Sigma Xi and the American Society for Horticultural Science.

Joseph Oskamp is survived by his wife, the former Achsa Moore, whom he married in 1914, and by a daughter, Mrs. Ralph H. Hill, both of Beach Haven, New Jersey; and by two grandsons, Jeffrey Hill of Columbus Ohio and Gary Hill of Wayne, New Jersey.

All those who knew him will remember Professor Oskamp as a dedicated person and a loyal Cornellian. His life recalls a quotation from James Oliver: "The world is blessed most by men who do things and not by those who merely talk about them."

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