

THE CLASSIFICATION AND REGISTRATION OF VARIETIES

H. J. Webber

Director, Citrus Experiment Station

Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Association:

Now my pleasant task is over, and I come to the more prosaic task. Your directors appointed a committee of five members to consider and study the classification and registration of varieties and their nomenclature and other things of similar nature.

I think we all realize that in a new industry of this kind we are dependent upon getting good varieties. We may talk about irrigation, fertilization, and cultivation, and such fundamental things, but after all at the present time the most important thing in the avocado industry, in my judgment, and I think in the judgment of the committee, is the obtaining of superior varieties.

I was very much interested in a statement made by one of the expert market men in the citrus industry to the effect that in the citrus industry the marketing question was most important. In the avocado industry, it is not a question of marketing primarily but of getting the best varieties of fruit in order to establish a market. Possibly our industry is growing too rapidly and taking up varieties that have not been thoroughly tried out. The question most frequently asked of the University men is, "What are the best varieties to plant?"

The present most important problem is to choose the varieties that are going to succeed the best. We know well that the majority of the varieties that we are talking about are not thoroughly tested varieties in any sense of the word. There are some varieties that we are planting on the basis of what they are supposed to do rather than on known performance records under California conditions. It is of the highest necessity that thorough tests be made and that the fruits be studied, and reliable records published.

One of the main lines of work of this committee is expected to be the judging of the seedlings and importations brought to the attention of the Association. This is a work similar to that of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society and various other societies of similar nature in stimulating the production of improved new sorts through awards of medals and prizes. It seems to your committee that one of the primary things for this Association to do is to establish some safe method to get at the judgment of fruits.

We would like to have the Association discuss the exhibition and the methods to be pursued in the future. We have before us in this Association a most wonderful experience. I know of no case where an association has been organized in the very beginning of an industry and where the history of the importation and the history of every original seedling tree of every variety is so well known and where we can follow up every detail. Such men as Mr. Taft, Mr. Popenoe, Mr. Spinks, Mr. Walker, Mr.

Wagner, and a dozen other men, whose names I might call in connection with this industry, who have planted and grown new seedling varieties, or imported valuable new sorts, are historical characters. I wonder if we all realize the importance of this fact. We have not yet reached the point in the development of American history where we are ready to recognize properly agricultural achievement. It is just such work as these men are doing that is going to bring this recognition. It is fortunate that we have certain men in various parts of the country who are gaining recognition in this way. For instance, I always think of one or two men who stand out in connection with the corn industry, as for example, Mr. Reed of Illinois, who bred Reed's Yellow Dent corn, and Mr. Riley of Indiana, who bred the Boone County White corn. If some of us can add as much to the world's industries as these men added, we shall be fortunate indeed. The work of such men as Riley and Reed should be recorded in the pages of our history, and the time is coming shortly when the achievements of some of our members who are laying the foundation of a new industry, will receive their proper recognition in the history of the industrial development of California. They are adding something to improve the general welfare, and there is no higher aim.

I consider that we are an especially fortunate people, in having to deal with an industry just starting. Almost everything remains yet to be done, and it should be the business of every one of us to achieve something for the general good of the industry. There is inspiration in the thought of achievement, and so when I see the enthusiasm of this convention I think there is a good reason for it. Every grower of an avocado grove owes it to the industry and to himself to take an active part in the study of the industry. No man is so humble or so poorly educated but that he can have a place in this development. We desire knowledge of every detail of the industry, and to add to our knowledge at the present time all a grower is required to do is to keep a careful record of the different methods he pursues in caring for his grove, and observe and report on the results.

The study of varieties will for a number of years be our most important problem. It is not enough to produce fruit for market. We must produce fruit that will extend the market. Only by the production of the best fruit can the industry be extended to the proportions we all conceive as the future development. We are budding groves to various varieties today that we may be compelled to discard within two years. Building up a budded grove is an expensive undertaking, and it is thus of the highest importance that we reach an understanding at the earliest possible date of what varieties are satisfactory.

The grower must become a student of varieties, noting every characteristic, good or bad, of the various varieties he is growing. We should have no pet varieties but consider all varieties on the basis of their intrinsic qualities, as ready to recognize a bad quality as a good one.

Every budded tree of every variety in the state should be carefully followed as to yield in weight and number of fruits, and quality of fruit produced each year, in order that we may sooner be able to judge the important characteristics of the different varieties. These notes should include also the dates of picking, in order to determine definitely the season of maturing of the different varieties. The Association should collect such data ultimately and compile and digest the reports from various orchards to obtain the information desired, in concrete form. By such means we can probably most quickly

arrive at a safe judgment of the comparative value of the different varieties. I may say that the Citrus Experiment Station will be very glad to assist in the carrying out of such a cooperative study of varieties.

What has been said regarding the study of varieties, applies equally well to the study of methods of planting, cultivating, irrigating, manuring, and other processes.