

## THE AVOCADO IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

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I have not had as much experience as some with the avocado. My oldest trees are five summers' growth. I have a small experimental orchard of over ninety varieties.

I have nearly all of the good and some of the poor varieties that have originated in Southern California. I have secured a great many of the Mexican varieties that have been imported by different parties from Mexico, also the best varieties imported from Guatemala, and fifteen varieties of those they consider best in the Hawaiian Islands. Some say that it is foolish to try things from the Islands. My oldest tree is three summers' growth, and so far it grows as well and stands the winter as well, as any in the orchard. It has not bloomed yet, but there is plenty of time for that.

My trees are from all climes and we must not expect them all to grow and thrive in Southern California. That is why I am experimenting. Some are dwarf and others rapid growers in their native places, and we should expect the same here.

Difference in Growth of Varieties.—Now let me give a few illustrations to show you how the varieties from different sections differ in growth. I have a Mexican variety, the Atlixco, planted in the spring of 1913, that measures 18 feet 4 inches high, and has a 13 foot spread of branches.

Twenty feet from the Atlixco, planted the same day, is a Florida Trapp, measuring 5 feet 6 inches high, and with a spread of 6 feet.

Twenty feet from the Trapp in the same row is a Taft, one year younger than the Trapp, measuring in height 9 feet and with a spread of 10 feet.

Eighty feet from the Atlixco, in the same row, and planted the same day is the Mexican variety, Redondo, measuring 3 feet high with a 2 foot 6 inch spread of branches. This tree looks as though it wanted to grow, but makes poor progress. Later I think I will give it a change of climate. I have heard the Redondo spoken of as a good grower in some sections.

**Needed Experiments.**—If we experiment with many varieties, and throw out those that do not grow satisfactorily, then later throw those out that do not produce a good quality of fruit, we shall soon have fewer varieties and fruit of a better quality.

Another experiment we want to work on is the season of ripening. After getting a good quality of fruit, then select those that ripen the fruit early, medium and late. I believe if this is followed up we can have fruit on the table every day in the year. I have seventeen different varieties of budded avocados fruiting this year, and some of these for the first time. There are several others of the younger trees that bloomed but dropped their fruit

when small, and some that never set. Some of my oldest trees have bloomed every year since they have been old enough but have never set a fruit. I hope they will change this habit when they get older.

**Varieties that are hard to handle.**—We have about one hundred and twenty-five or more varieties in the state, and one-fourth of that number would be plenty. We can carry a larger number of varieties of the Mexican type as they will be for home use and local trade, but when it comes to the commercial varieties I believe we should have but few varieties. Some markets prefer the black, others the green colored fruit. I think that the size and shape are the most important fruit characters. Fruit weighing from three-fourths of a pound to one and a half pounds, would be a good size; round, or if not round, the nearer the better; and firm in seed. At Honolulu some think the loose seed the better fruit. In examining the fruit, they first take it up and shake it, and the looser the seed the better they consider the fruit.

As soon as our varieties imported from Mexico commence to fruit, it will be interesting to see how they will do in this climate, and when we have imported all of the varieties from other countries, we shall, I hope be able to show fruit far superior to any now cultivated in California.

**Pruning.**—At the last meeting I attended, the majority of the members favored light or no pruning for the avocado. I was hoping that I could attend this meeting to get some instructions on pruning. I have formed my tops low, and a great many of the limbs are resting on the ground. The time to prune is another question I shall experiment on in the spring. I prefer that time to the fall. If done in the fall, pruning might force the sap out and start fresh growth for the frost. In the spring I will cut the bottom limbs off so the air can circulate under the tree; then thin the top so the air and light can pass through.

The Taft is about as difficult a tree to handle as any variety I have experimented with. I experimented on some last spring, taking off considerable brush, but they do not show it now. Another difficulty with the Taft is, it is a tree that wants watching to keep a head or leader. You tie up a branch that looks the best, for a leader, and in a few weeks there is another that has grown faster and looks as though it would be a better limb for the purpose. I will keep on trying and if my bamboo holds out, I believe I shall succeed. If this is not attended to and such a leader formed, you will have a fork in your tree that will split down and spoil the tree.

**New varieties.**—I have shipped from Hawaii several hundred seed of the best avocado fruit they produce there and have distributed these from San Diego to Santa Barbara in tropical places in the hope of getting some good new varieties. This year I have budded a few of the best of these varieties, and shall distribute them to those that will give them good care, and I hope we shall find some varieties that will be superior to our best.