

## DISCUSSION OF THE FLORIDA AVOCADO SITUATION

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It was my privilege to spend the past winter from September to February in Southern Florida. I availed myself of this opportunity to familiarize myself with the avocado conditions in that state.

It was my good fortune to meet an old-time California friend who is now —and has been, since the year 1915, the Horticultural Inspector for the United States Government, the state and the district embracing Broward, Dade and Monroe counties. Through this association I was able to get on the inside of the general avocado conditions in that state.

I presume that the question which is uppermost in your minds just at this moment is whether or not the Florida avocado will severely hurt the California fruit from a commercial standpoint. If there is any such thought in your minds, I will endeavor at once to dispel it.

If you have been impressed with the idea that the avocado can be grown with less expense in Florida than in Southern California, you should abandon that thought, for the subdivision, craze in Southern Florida has already swallowed up a large number of the best producing groves at a purchase price of \$10,000 per acre. I know of a number of other good producing groves in the Homestead section for which the owners refused \$10,000 and two other cases in particular in which the owners refused \$15,000 per acre.

The high cost of avocado land in Southern Florida is not the only menace they are up against. The Florida avocado will never have a preference in the market over California because it has a flat, watery, insipid taste, ranging in oil content only from three to eight per cent. The Florida fruit does not have the rich nut oil, buttery taste characteristic of the California fruit.

I met many eastern people in Florida who did not even know we grow avocados in California. There are a hundred million people in the United States who have never eaten an avocado. There are unlimited possibilities for this prince of all fruits when the public in general become acquainted with the avocado of Florida and California. Our fruit, for its superior qualities, will have such a preference over the Florida fruit that it will be necessary to plant every available acre suitable for avocados in Southern California.

We need never have any fear of Florida growers appropriating California varieties, for they do not mature perfectly in the Florida climate. The best Fuerte produced there is a little lop-sided fruit weighing about six ounces. The Tart was one of their hopeful California varieties, but it has been abandoned also. None of the California varieties develop to a commercial size or oil content in Florida. Their best commercial varieties,

the Pollock and Trapp, are Fall fruits, all picked and off the market by December first. There is a dearth of avocados in Florida from Thanksgiving to the middle of January, when the Taylor and Schmidt, two Guatemala varieties, come in. They weigh about two pounds each and are too large for profitable commercial trade, and, besides, they will never make a hit with the public for another very good reason—they are doomed by a pest that ruins the fruit. This pest is known as anthracnose, which causes a hard growth under the skin of the avocado in the body of the fruit, about an inch to an inch and a half square and one half inch thick, resembling very much a cancerous growth in the human flesh. That pest renders those varieties repulsive to the consuming public. This condition was observed only in their Guatemalan varieties and not in the Trapp or Pollock, which are of the West India type.

My observations summed up briefly are as follows:

I do not believe that the Florida fruit will ever seriously hurt our California industry from a commercial standpoint, because—

1. The Florida fruit does not have the rich, oily, buttery nut flavor contained in the California fruit, their oil content being less than one-half that of the California fruit.
2. Our best varieties come in the midwinter and spring; theirs are done by September. The demand will always be stronger in midwinter. The California varieties are in season almost continuously throughout the year. Florida is not blessed with this condition.
3. We have no serious pests that injure our fruit.
4. The California fruit is a better shipper than the Florida product and reaches the eastern markets in better condition than the Florida fruit. Viewed from every angle, the California fruit is superior to that of Florida. No other horticultural venture in Southern California has such a profitable future as that of the avocado.