

California Avocado Association 1931 Yearbook 16: 36-37

ROOTSTOCK

FUERTES

November 22, 1930

Question: Do Fuertes seed make good rootstock?

Dr. Coit: An occasional Fuerte seed makes a marvelous rootstock but the variability of it, due to its hybrid nature, makes the row so irregular that most nurserymen don't care to use it. What we desire in a nursery is regularity, uniformity, and Fuerte seedlings do not give this. Out of one hundred Fuerte seedlings we can get some very excellent stock. But there are so many poor ones that rather than use Fuerte, we prefer some pure Mexican like

Harmon, which in my opinion is one of the best, Ganter which is good, and a number of others.

WEST INDIAN

November 22, 1930

Question: Have we had any experience in this state with the West Indian type of seed for rootstock?

Dr. Coit: The person who has tried it out most thoroughly and over a long period of years is Sam Thompson of Carlsbad. However, he has top-worked most all of his trees over to Guatemalan and Mexican varieties. The seeds make a good rootstock but should not be used in California because the trees are so tender to frost. Any nurseryman who uses West Indian seed for rootstock should notify the growers of the nature of this rootstock. Otherwise a large proportion of trees will be frozen out from under him. He should notify his growers to be sure to get such trees on the top of a hill and there are mighty few nurserymen who will take a chance. They feel and I feel there is no occasion to use West Indian stock unless it could be proven to be a greatly superior stock, which is unlikely. Therefore, why fly in the face of trouble? You know there are three great races of avocados: The Mexican is a native of the highlands and can stand cold with dry weather as well as hot weather. The Guatemalan comes from further South and endures a somewhat less degree of cold but can stand some cold and some heat. The West Indian is a purely tropical fruit and is entirely uncomfortable in our climate where we have moisture with cold and heat with dryness. Have you ever noticed in California that when it is moist, it is cold, and when it is hot, it is dry?—that is the reason we have so many tourists. The West Indian just dotes on damp tropical weather and that

is why it does well in Southern Florida as in Dade County. Up in the Florida Ridge section, they grow Guatemalans and Mexicans better than the West Indians.

MEXICAN

May 16, 1931

Question: In all writings on the subject of avocado growing, mention is made of the desirability of using known rootstock and as a rule they advise using Mexican seedlings. I would like to know if any investigation has been made to determine the relative merits of the named varieties of Mexican seedlings, and if so, where can a record of this investigation be found. Can you give me any information on the merits of the Harmon seedling as a rootstock for Fuertes and Nabals?

Dr. Coit: Mr. Barrett, do you know of any accurate comparative tests of different Mexicans such as the Ganter and the Harmon.

Mr. Barrett: I do not. My own personal opinion is that I don't like Harmon stock. Ganter stock seems to be very satisfactory. My own feeling in the matter is that if you can pick out a medium-sized, smooth-surface Mexican seedling, you will generally get best results but so far as any definite data is concerned, I do not know of any. It is something we need work on more than almost anything I know of.

Comment: I performed a very interesting experiment in my own nursery two years ago. I planted rows of Harmons and Val de Flor seedlings side by side and the comparison showed that the Harmon was decidedly better growing stock than Val de Flor. The trees grew somewhat better but not a great deal. At least that particular row. The Harmons did quite well indeed and were satisfactory. I think the Ganter is equally satisfactory and there are many good strong vigorous Mexican seedlings. One that I know of in particular that j has yielded twenty thousand fruits at a single picking, is of very great vigor and does yield very excellent small fruit. It has a nice seed in it.

COMPATABILITY

Question: Would it be possible to know whether any of those rootstocks are the right ones as far as harmony between top and root is concerned for another fifty years?

Answer: The rootstock experimental work necessarily takes many years of time and this association is urging the Citrus Experiment Station to start that work. Prof. Robert W. Hodgson, when he comes back from his leave in Africa, has indicated that he is going to take up a study of avocado rootstocks at his planting at Westwood. In fact, we have already done some work assisting him in finding suitable stocks to begin this work.

*See Wahlberg's article on "Essentials of Avocado Culture," page 131.