



Germplasms of the Mexican Avocado

The above photograph was made at Orange, California, by David Fairchild in October 1919. The fruit was picked from a tree of the Mexican race which grew from a seed picked from a tree in Santiago, Chile by Dr. Fairchild in 1899. Dr. Fairchild sent this seed to Mr. C. P. Taft at Orange who planted it, and in after years stated that it was the first avocado seed he ever planted.

The fruit is black, the skin thin, and the flavor rich and nutty. The tree is hardy to cold. There is a striking resemblance to the Benedict. While there are no known records of the source of the several thousand Mexican seeds planted by Mr. Benedict the real estate promoter who established the Sunnyslope Avocado Nursery at Bangor, Butte County, California, in 1912, it is not unlikely that a part at least of his seed was purchased from Mr. Taft who was in the seed and nursery business at that time. If such is the case, then Benedict is a second generation seedling from Chile.

Later Edwin G. Hart secured Mexican seeds from Queretaro, Mexico; and A. R. Rideout and M. Garcia brought in a large amount of Mexican seed from Northern Mexico. This was before the days of the quarantine against the avocado seed weevil. Thus we find that avocado germplasm of the Mexican race was early brought together in Southern California from Chili, Atlixco, and Queretaro. The mixing of these divergent strains by intercrossing here has resulted in a wide multiplicity of Mexican forms ranging from the very small black Mexicola to the large green Duke.

The continued intercrossing of these different lines of Mexican race germplasm, and the bringing into fruit of additional generations from these crosses may be expected to finally give rise to varieties of Mexican avocados hardy to both cold and heat, and with satisfactory marketability. (Editor)