

Avocadoists Make a Tour

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Forty-nine auto-loads of Orange county avocado growers recently crossed the county line to see what was going on in avocado culture in San Diego County. At Carlsbad, County Agents Harold Wahlberg, Eric Eastman and Jean Miller took charge of the parade.

The first stop was at the avocado orchard of Dean Palmer, near Carlsbad. The orchard is twelve years old, on Elkhorn loam soil, topworked to Fuertes. Despite the long cool and windy weather this spring, the trees have made very good growth response. It will be recalled that Dean Palmer, now deputy agricultural commissioner of San Diego County, is the man who worked out the details for the control of Latania scale.

The next stop was at the Calavo's Vista plant where Robert Haymaker and Roy Kepner took the party through the packing house. At the present time about three carloads of avocados per day are being shipped. The fruit is precooled prior to shipment by portable equipment. The plant is using a newly devised descaling machine for the first time this season. The fruit is soaked for a minute and a half in a dilute chemical bath, and then is exposed to a spray from many small jets of water under high pressure.

VISTA PACKING-HOUSE CENTRALLY LOCATED

The Vista plant, as Robert Haymaker explained, is in the center of an 8,000-acre avocado industry.

The orchard of C. D. Field is located near Vista on a silty clay loam of granite origin, which is described as being very good avocado soil. Due to the texture of soil and the slope it drains satisfactorily. Under-head sprinklers of a portable type are used in alternate panel irrigations. Mr. Field uses the service of a soil laboratory for soil moisture determinations. He feels that he has gotten considerably better yields by keeping a more accurate check on the soil moisture content. Due to the use of manures for a number of years, which brought about the introduction of Bermuda grass seed, the place supports a heavy growth of Bermuda cover. To keep the grass growth within reasonable limits, Mr. Field has introduced the use of "automatic mowing machines" in the form of Toulouse geese. He reports that they do a fine job and do very well under the conditions. There are at present twelve geese per acre. However, about eighteen birds per acre could be supported. The orchard is fenced, of course.

The group also visited the nursery of A. G. Hazzard. Seedling citrus stock was in the process of being budded and a demonstration was given for the benefit of the visitors who generally agreed that it was easier seen than done. Mr. Hazzard's orchard has

been clean cultivated until the past year. Now he is going to try a permanent cover crop. Most of the fruit is of the Fuerte variety, although there are a few trees of other varieties being grown for observation. One Ryan tree, four years old, has borne three crops despite the 1937 freeze.

A quick stop was made at the property of H. B. Scates. He has installed low-head sprinklers and has allowed the basins which were previously used to remain, permitting a permanent cover to grow.

On the road to Fallbrook we observed the activities of the Soil Conservation Service. A number of check dams and settling basins have been installed for the purpose of sinking the water into the soil rather than permitting it to run off to the ocean. Pump lifts in the immediate area have been reduced as much as forty feet. Much of the area is included in the water facilities district and a bond issue was recently voted for the purpose of bringing in water from the San Luis Rey River. Construction is now under way and a storage reservoir is nearly completed. Land owners in many cases have qualified for government loans at five per cent to improve irrigation and drainage facilities on their own properties.

PERMANENT COVER-CROP AT ANTHONY ORCHARD

One of the prime movers in the efforts to conserve and improve the water supply of the Fallbrook section has been A. H. Anthony whose avocado grove was next visited. A few years ago he installed settling basins on his property at his own expense. More recently some of the work which he began has been amplified and completed by the S.C.S.

The Anthony place includes thirty acres of avocados, the oldest trees being eight years of age. They have been double planted, the plan being ultimately to remove alternate trees. Natural cover crop was allowed to grow but it is mowed frequently enough to keep it under control. Low-head sprinkling system is used on part of the property. Anthony prunes his trees higher from the ground than do most people. He contemplates grazing sheep in his orchard. He uses a great deal of organic matter on the place but does no cultivation. He maintains a central leader and stakes the trees for the first four years. In general, production is very good. One tree last year produced 1,967 fruit, weighing about 1000 lbs. He marketed about a quarter of a million pounds of Fuertes and will have some summer fruit, also. Anthony's was one of the first to use individual tree records. These have brought out great differences in production of individual trees and serve as a basis for future replacements. The importance of careful management of cover crops was stressed. They require more water and more fertilizer, but protect against soil erosion.

D. W. Wilt has fifteen acres of citrus near Fallbrook which he handles ingeniously. He is using a permanent cover crop but he says non-cultivation doesn't mean "no work". He uses the hoe a great deal and keeps weeds from growing under the trees. A small power mowing machine is used to cut the grass at suitable intervals.

B. M. McDonald has eighty acres of avocados and an avocado nursery. For a number of years he has been keeping individual tree records and has found some which are consistently heavy producers. Bud wood from these trees is being used for propagation

purposes. In McDonald's orchard considerable shading has occurred and he is faced with the necessity of removing quite a few of the trees. The place has never been cultivated and is being operated with a relatively low overhead. He says he would not start a Bermuda grass cover on purpose but since he has one he feels it is cheaper to use more water than to try to get rid of the grass. Basin irrigation is being used taut McDonald says if he were doing it over again he would use sprinklers.