

## AVOCADO TREES OF UNUSUAL SIZE

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Observations on avocado trees both cultivated and in their natural habitat have revealed some specimens of unusual proportions which warrant mention. One of the largest avocado trees encountered during travels in Mexico and Central America is a famous specimen at Hacienda Santa Engracias, an old Spanish rancho about 35 miles northwest of Ciudad Victoria in the state of Tamaulipas, Mexico.



This patriarch bears annually literally thousands of fruits. These fruits are small, thin-skinned and not of high commercial quality according to our standards, but acceptable, nevertheless, to the local inhabitants. Regardless of recent wind damage, July, 1950, which caused considerable breakage of rather large limbs, this giant tree still remains in relatively good condition despite its estimated age of 125 years. The tree was planted by the father of Jose Martinez, the present owner of the Hacienda.

Measurements made of the trunk of this giant at four feet from the ground indicate a circumference of more than 19 feet, hence an average diameter of slightly over six feet. The height is estimated as more than eighty feet. Photographs of the entire tree are practically impossible to obtain because of buildings and other nearby trees. The accompanying photograph of the trunk base gives a partial impression of the immense size of this fine old specimen.

Other trees which grow nearby in the same Hacienda dooryard orchard are of

lesser dimensions, but nevertheless of great proportions. Two specimens were measured with trunk circumferences of more than 15 feet and 12 feet which, expressed in diameters, are  $4\frac{3}{4}$  and  $3\frac{3}{4}$  feet respectively. Other large trees, though somewhat smaller in dimensions, are common in the area.

The largest avocado tree recorded thus far probably is that observed by Wilson Popenoe in the Ecuadorean Andes. A photograph of this specimen, one of the Mexican race, is found on page 12 of the 1938 Yearbook. While actual dimensions are not given, one can estimate that the trunk must be about eight feet in diameter. Dr. Popenoe reports that this is the largest avocado tree he has ever seen.

Trees of such great size as those described from Mexico and other areas have not been found in California, probably because our oldest trees are not more than sixty years of age, hence have not attained maximum size. One of the largest of California specimens brought to our attention thus far is a fine old Mexican seedling planted about 1913 in Ventura County which has a trunk circumference of  $11\frac{1}{4}$  feet or a diameter of approximately  $3\frac{1}{2}$  feet. The parent Ganter tree at Whittier is another fine example of a large avocado tree now 50 years old. This tree has a trunk circumference of approximately 114 inches or a diameter of 3 feet 2 inches. We will appreciate having our attention called to other avocado trees, especially those in California, which are of unusually large proportions of trunk or height so that they can be recorded and studied.