

## AVOCADOS AT MENTONE

### **M. M. Winslow**

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Probably Mentone, four miles east of Redlands, is the location of the most inland commercial planting of avocados in southern California. George Stewart and Joe Soffel each planted seven acres in 1949 as a single orchard. The soil is classified as the Tujunga gravelly sand. It is a soil of good depth and well drained. Trees are growing as well in an area where the top three feet of soil was removed as where the soil was not disturbed.

The main variety planted was the Fuerte, but several other varieties, such as the Clifton, Lodge, Zutano, Nowels, Jalna, Hass, and Wright, were included for trial. Stewart and Soffel pioneered avocado growing in this area and planted varieties, after inspection of bearing orchards in other inland areas, that appeared to be most likely to succeed. They made several trips to Riverside to inspect the variety orchard at the University of California Citrus Experiment Station.

The trees, on the whole, have made an excellent growth. They are irrigated at weekly intervals and the water is held on the land six hours in one unit and for ten hours in the other. The trees receiving water for six-hours appear to have grown as well as those having water for ten hours. The irrigation run is 240 feet. Furrow irrigation is used, with a furrow on each side of the tree row. Additional furrows will be added as the trees increase in size. During the 1952 and 1953 irrigation seasons anhydrous ammonia was applied at intervals. This type of soil is low in nitrogen and no doubt early fertilization has improved tree growth.

Conclusions about the production of the various varieties cannot be drawn because the trees are too young. The Fuerte has produced a sprinkling of fruit. The heaviest producers to date are the Lodge, Wright, Zutano, and Jalna.

It is interesting to note that in this location the Zutano makes a spreading type of tree. In other locations it has been outstanding for its straight, upright growth. Both growers believe in having plenty of bees in the orchard during bloom. The past season 200 colonies were kept in this 14-acre orchard.

This well-managed orchard will bear watching for several years to learn about the possibility of growing avocados commercially this far inland.