

A USEFUL HAND NUTCRACKER FOR MACADAMIA NUTS

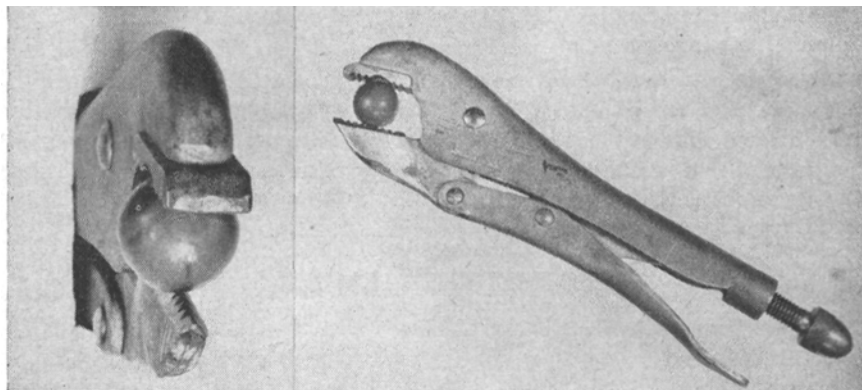
C. A. Schroeder

Associate Professor of Horticulture, University of California (Los Angeles), and Chairman of the Subtropical Fruit Varieties Committee, California Avocado Society.

A survey of a large number of macadamia nut samples, which were judged for shell thickness, has involved the use of several types of nutcrackers, both stationary and portable, with variable results in ease and satisfaction of operation. The macadamia nut is spherical in form. The extremely heavy shell, often 1/8 inch or more in thickness, is characteristic of many seedlings. Ordinary nutcrackers operated in the hand will not break the shells. A heavy sledge hammer or a medium size or large machinist's vise will shatter the shell, but frequently such devices cause considerable crushing or at least bruising of the kernel as well as fragmentation of the shell.

A simple and satisfactory hand-operated cracker was made from a pair of large "power pliers" or "grip-pliers," which are available at any hardware store. The stationary jaw was modified by grinding off a few teeth to form a small depression, which keeps the nut from rolling lengthwise on the jaw. The sides of the movable jaw were cut down on an emery wheel and ground to a "cutting edge" without destroying the teeth of the jaw, which keep the nut from rolling lengthwise on the cutting blade.

Advantage is taken of the morphology of the fruit in making a clean cut of the nut shell. The macadamia nut is not a true botanic nut, but has been shown to be the seed of a follicle. The nut or seed has a suture or line of union. If the pressure of the cutting edge of the cracker is brought to bear along the suture, a relatively clean cleavage of the shell or seed coat results and the kernel thus is obtained without injury.



Macadamia nut cracker made from "grip-pliers." Note cutting edge ground on lower movable jaw and depression on fixed jaw.