

PROTECTING NEWLY GRAFTED AVOCADO STUMPS AND SCIONS FROM SUNBURN

Elwood E. Trask

Specialist in avocado culture and member of the board of directors of the California Avocado Society.

It has been common practice for commercial grafters to protect the avocado stumps and scions by covering with ventilated paper bags. In some areas, principally coastal, the paper bags provide protection for such pests as the mealy bug or worms which sap the vitality of the buds or eat them as they start to grow on the scions. Some operators have found that exposing the newly grafted stumps to the sun has allowed predators to control the mealy bugs and leaf-eating insects. However, occasionally, during a very hot spell the top of the stump becomes sunburned and the scions are lost.

Various methods have been tried to expose the scions and protect the stump from direct sun rays. Wrapping the stump with paper or burlap is sometimes used, but here again the pests hide under the wrapping and continue their work of destruction.

Recent experiments with latex based paints have proved entirely satisfactory, giving ample protection from the sun and allowing the scions to develop without injury.

The method used is to complete the graft, either saw kerf or bark, cover the cut surfaces with asphalt emulsion paint, then as soon as the surface of the black emulsion is dry, cover all of the black surface with white latex based paint. The latex paint alone does not appear to give sufficient protection to the cut surfaces against wood-rotting fungi.

The latex paint can also be used to protect exposed surfaces of the trunk. In no case, under extreme exposure to the sun has any sunburning been observed, and scions have made excellent growth.



Grafted avocado stump painted with asphalt emulsion covered with rubber base white paint.