

## A NEW AVOCADO OF THE MEXICAN RACE

Wilson Popenoe

Quite a few members of the Old Guard will recall those expeditions to Mexico in the late 1940s, when we were determined to find an avocado which looked like a Fuerte, had the commercial qualities of a Fuerte, but didn't bear like a Fuerte. That is to say, we wanted a tree which would produce good crops every year, in all avocado regions. Just as simple as that.

It was during the 1948 expedition that we descended for the last time on the famous Rodiles grove near Atlixco and really gave it the works. The Guatemalans, the Mexicans, the crosses, the back-crosses, the double-crosses, and all the rest. I still can't figure out why we didn't turn up something which by this time would have pushed Fuerte right off the map.

After the California boys had decided that there was nothing left which would merit lebensraum south of the Tehachapi, Louis Williams and I decided to take a last look at the cats and dogs. We came up against a strong sturdy tree; thick stiff leaves that a red spider could never get his teeth into; and the fruit a beautiful "small black Mex."

The California boys, by this time, were in no frame of mind to talk, or even think, about small black Mexes, so Louis and I just stuck a few budsticks into our respective pockets (as they put it, in Spanish) and went back to Honduras.

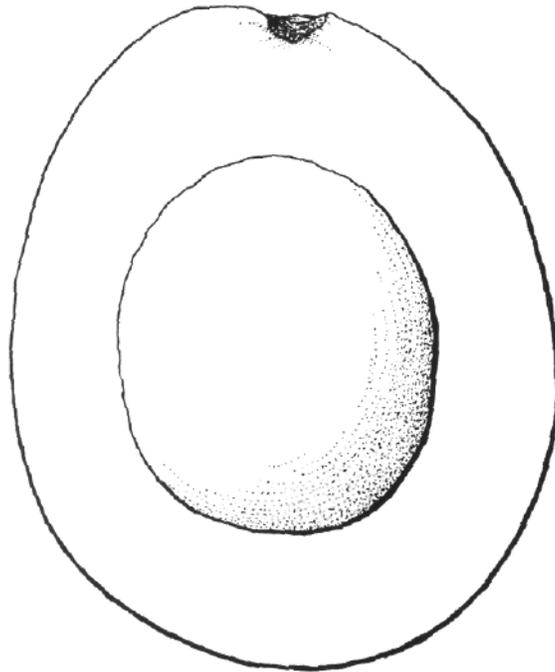
This past autumn (1963) I have had occasion to watch this variety closely in the experimental orchard (45 varieties) at Escuela Agrícola Panamericana, and I liked it so well that I propose to describe it pomologically and give it a name. To me it is just about the neatest, nicest small black Mex I have ever seen, and I have seen quite a few. No one can deny that there is a place for avocados of the Mexican race in the horticultural world, even though they are not the perfect avocados for growers in South Africa to ship to Covent Garden in London. But you just ask any Mexican if they are not the eatingest avocados that grow. He will say Yes, and thirty million Mexicans can't be wrong.

We can't say that our new variety will stand more cold than all other Mexicans. We can't say just how productive it will be, but we think—based on its behavior in Honduras—that it will bear good crops annually, unless the trees are hit by a freeze or blown out of the ground. Our reasons for giving it a name and planning to disseminate it from Escuela Agrícola Panamericana are these: It is an unusually beautiful little fruit, of attractive form and brilliant glossy surface; flesh of good quality and quite satisfactory oil content; and perhaps most important of all, a seed definitely smaller in relation to the size of the fruit than in 90 percent of the avocados of this race I have seen and worked with in my career as an avocado **fanatico**. Most Mexican avocados have too large a "bone," as they call the seed south of the Rio Grande.

## NENA—NEW VARIETY

No. 14375 (specimen in the herbarium of Escuela Agrícola Panamericana), from the Rodiles grove near Atlixco, Estado de Puebla, Mexico. August 1948.

THE NENA AVOCADO  
Natural Size



Form ovoid, quite uniformly so; size medium to large for an avocado of the Mexican race, length about  $3\frac{1}{4}$  inches, greatest breadth about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches, weight six to eight ounces; surface smooth, lenticels few, yellowish, color dark purple, glossy; skin of typical thickness for this race; flesh cream-colored, changing to greenish near the skin, with very slight fiber markings, buttery in texture, and of nutty flavor; oil content as determined by Carlos Burgos from specimens grown at Escuela Agrícola Panamericana, near Tegucigalpa, Honduras (elevation 2500 feet), 19 to 25 percent; quality good; seed rather small for a Mexican avocado, tight in its cavity, with both seed coats adhering closely. Season October and November at Escuela Agrícola Panamericana.

Tree vigorous, erect, broad, branches and branchlets stiff. Productiveness difficult to judge on the basis of limited experience in the uplands of Honduras, but seems likely to be quite satisfactory.