

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The chairman announced that the time had come for general discussion, and continuing, said:

I am going to ask Dr. Coit to take the chair for guiding this discussion. One thing I desire to remark upon now, and that is, it is up to us to all decide on a name and stick to it, if we want something which will take the place of "alligator pear." My favorite has been ahuate. I am predisposed to that because I learned the name in Mexico, but I am willing to bury my own preference with the idea that the association should at this meeting decide by a vote of some sort, which name to adopt, and with the understanding that it stands back of the name chosen, because if we don't everybody is going to call the fruit alligator pear. I am not sure but what they will anyway. The only chance of avoiding that is to get behind one name. When we named this the California Ahuate Association, I thought we had adopted that name, but it is only by standing behind it that we can get results.

We have not been agreed on that name on the board of directors. It has been the one question that we have not been unanimous on. I want to see some decision arrived at.

Assuming the chair, Dr. Coit said:

Friends, the program has been completed. A good many avocado growers have a lot in their minds, and we want to get together and have a real heart to heart discussion and pass around some of this information from one to another. So if anybody hasn't time to stay—I suppose we can stay as long as we like—until dinner time, now is the time for them to make their getaway. This is an especially interesting subject.

If you pardon me for saying just a word or two before throwing this open to general discussion, I want to emphasize what the president said in regard to this association and its importance and urge every one who can, even if you don't grow avocados, to join the association and give us your support. I have just returned from a two weeks trip through the desert country and I am very much interested there about the date industry. They have organized a Growers' Association, and they are directing that young, growing industry of date culture in the right way, and it has developed very successfully. In fact, I am interested in watching these two young industries, the date growing industry and the avocado growing industry, and it is a question in my mind which one California is going to be the proudest of in ten or fifteen years from now.

A good many speakers today have mentioned this question of varieties, and I would like to make a suggestion, and that is, that with the large number of seedlings coming into fruiting, we are going to have a confusion of names, unless some definite action is taken. There are going to be so many seedlings that look so much alike and so many people who raise a pet seedling in their backyard, who think it like an only child, cannot be convinced but what it is the best thing produced under the sun. that we need some committee—I don't see why the president of the association should not appoint the

committee—on new varieties and nomenclature, whose business it would be to judge the fruit as it is brought in. If we are going to have two meetings a year we can get every one who has seedlings, and encourage them to bring them in here and exhibit them. Those people who are of the thick-skinned crowd can come in the spring, and the thin-skinned in the fall, and then the committee can correctly judge the value of those and give some tangible evidence of their quality, for instance, an award of merit. Nurserymen propagating a variety say that it is a good variety, and some one says, "Who says so?" Answer: "The Committee of the Avocado Association gave this award of merit." And that would mean something, and those that are given the award of merit in that way could be scientifically described and given a name.

Now, my friends, we would like to direct this discussion clearly and concisely. This question of name, I presume, comes up first.

THE NAME

D. W. Coolidge, secretary of the association took the chair.

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the name "Avocado" instead of "Ahuacate."

Mr. Adams of Upland opened the discussion as follows:

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen: It is a thing of vital moment to us to decide upon a name if we are going to get rid of the words "alligator pear," and I am sure most of us don't desire to have our fruit masquerade, under anything that has relation to either alligators or pears, and if you could realize what that one effort could accomplish you would not hesitate. I think you can readily see if you refer back to the efforts we made in the early days of the citrus fruit industry to change the word "grape fruit." The United States Department of Agriculture, the American Horticultural Society, and the Society of Growers and Nurserymen, and very large people interested in producing this fruit, used every effort to bring about the adoption of the name Pomelo, but the people in general, consumers, retailers and jobbers, had got used to the name grape fruit and they would have no other. The effort failed, and now, today, we have a similar opportunity, a great deal better opportunity, because it is much earlier in the history of the industry, to adopt a name for popular usage.

You have heard the gentleman say that most of the consumers of the fruit call it the alligator pear, and this will become, I am sure, an unsuccessful result to change that unless all the forces are united in favor of one name. Now, if we undertake to adopt the name ahucate, which is undoubtedly the most correct name, we are going to fail, because a large majority of the growers are used to avocado. If you have watched the program, hardly anybody used any other name. The word ahucate is impossible to pronounce by English-speaking people according to the way it is spelled. You have to know something about Spanish when you try to pronounce it. That is not true of the word avocado. It can be pronounced the way it is spelled, by English-speaking people, and is easy to acquire. It is a word that has been identified with the fruit. I don't see any reason why it is not a suitable name to use, and surely if we succeed in having any other name than alligator pear, we cannot succeed in having a name different from the name now used. Therefore, I make this motion, in order to avoid having the name alligator pear. I am sure if we divide our forces we will not succeed in getting the

change, but if we all unite in getting practically one name we have much better chances of succeeding.

Mr. Hart: Mr. Adams, while mostly correct, makes some statements I cannot agree with, and one of them is that the word "Avocado" is used in Mexico.

Mr. Adams: I have that statement from Mr. R. O. Price, who was a long time in charge of a large estate on the Isthmus of Tehuantepec.

Mr. Hart: I lived in Tehauntepec for some years, and I never ran across any Mexican who used any other word than ahuate. In some places it is spelled aguacate, and the Indians in places, would spell it a-h-u-a-c-a-t-l.

I think you have missed the strongest argument in favor of the word avocado. And that is, that it has the backing of the Department of Agriculture. The Department of Agriculture made a mistake in calling the fruit the avocado through the ignorance of some subordinate. They have put that name through the pomological institute, and are not willing to correct their mistake now. The question is whether it would be better policy to correct the mistake and use the word ahuate, or to continue and use the word avocado. Now, the Department of Agriculture has a good deal of power, and I am willing to say that we don't want to attack it unless we are sure we will stand by each other. Unless we are going to fight for the name we advocate, we had better take our medicine and call it the avocado, not because it is right, but because we have to. The Department has a great deal of power and when it comes to a show down they can stop our shipping avocados under the name ahuates. They are not disposed to acknowledge mistakes. As a matter of fact, if you look up the name of avocado, you will find it is a Spanish term for serving, an appeal, from one court to another. The whole thing is obsolete. There is no connection with any fruit or with any living thing. It was the error of some one in the Department trying to translate something he didn't know anything about. The Department accepted it, and they are strong, and they don't have to acknowledge their mistakes. I think if we are unanimous for the name ahuate, we would make them come through. I am not for fighting and bumping my head against a stonewall unless I am sure of my associates, and I am not sure, because some are against me. I think the proper thing is to adopt the name avocado, but let us not adopt it without understanding the reason for it.

Professor Condit, in response to these remarks, said:

I have carried on quite an investigation in literature, and I find that the first use of the name avocado was in 1696, by a man by the name of Sloan. I have just received a photograph of the original book written by Mr. Sloan, showing the word, avocado, and I find during practically two hundred years since this word has been largely used in the English literature. I believe we should encourage the use of this name because it is an English name, and has been endorsed by these other associations.

If this is a proper time for a motion, I have been thinking of the matter of our varieties, and there has been impressed on me that the Department of Agriculture has been doing very excellent work in the importation of different varieties, and it has also come to my attention and notice that there are a very large number of fruits existing probably in Guatemala and Central America which have not been introduced and should be brought

into California at the very earliest possible date. It seems to me while the department may possibly send a man to these foreign countries, it is likely they might do it a little earlier, if we were to urge upon them the necessity and desirability of having some one go down there as soon as possible, and get hold of fruits, and I have had that so strongly impressed on me, that I have prepared a resolution which the Association might want to send to the Secretary of Agriculture. I am not a member of the association, and have no right to offer such a resolution. If you desire, however, I will read that resolution, and possibly some of you may offer it.

Motion to adopt the name "Avocado" carried.

Importation Urged

Whereas, the possibility of developing in California a successful avocado-growing industry has in our judgment been amply demonstrated; and,

Whereas, we have reason to believe that many valuable varieties, particularly cold-resistant sorts, exist in Central America, Mexico, and South America that have not been introduced into the United States, and which would probably be of great value in the further development of the industry in California and help to insure its permanent success.

Therefore, be it resolved:

- (1) That we urge upon the Secretary of Agriculture and his associates in the Seed and Plant Introduction work of the Department of Agriculture the great importance of sending a special agricultural explorer to these countries at the earliest possible date to secure and import into the United States all varieties of the avocado that can be obtained;
- (2) That in recognition of the value of the importations of avocado varieties already made by the Department of Agriculture, we also express to the Secretary of Agriculture our keen appreciation of the value to the industry of the service his department has already rendered;
- (3) That copies of these resolutions be forwarded to the Honorable Secretary of Agriculture and to the Chief of the Bureau of Plant Industry.

Dr. Webber was elected an honorary member of the association, and then moved the passage of the above resolution, which was duly seconded and carried.

PRUNING

Mr. C. P. Taft, who was questioned relative to one of the famous trees of Southern California, grown on his place at Orange, which is known as the original of the Taft variety, said that it had been heavily pruned, but in order to obtain bud wood rather than for shaping the tree. He was in doubt as to whether this had delayed the fruiting or lessened the amount of production. Along this line he said a medium sized tree that had borne fruit was badly damaged by a wind storm—one side blown off—and that for the next three and a half years it devoted all its energies to rebuilding wood. Last year it regained its normal size and now has one thousand fruits on it. Mr. Taft will prune only when he thinks it necessary, perhaps only in shaping the tree. Disastrous experiences from pruning in August have convinced him that the trees should not be cut back in the

very hot weather. He prefers the early spring or November. This applies to nursery stock as well as older trees. He considers spring or fall as the most desirable for pruning.

After a bud has taken hold and is ready to grow, Mr. Taft does not cut the top of the seedling back until cool weather, leaving it to protect the young tree from the sun.

In the course of a dialogue on the subject, J. T. Whedon advised such protection for the trunks by encouraging downward, growth of foliage as with oranges. He believes in waxing the cuts regardless of how smooth they are. D. W. Coolidge agreed as to this method, and advised systematic, regular pruning for the first few years, but differed with Mr. Taft as to the season for such work, advising cutting back in the vigorous growing season, when the high flow of sap will heal the cut more thoroughly.

E. S. Thacher's experience tends to favor pruning. His trees are seven years old and all bushy, some of them threw out high limbs in the center and these were cut back, giving his trees a uniform appearance. His theory is that it does not hurt to cut them any more than any other tree, and later he believes the production will be increased by pruning. He advises waxing the cuts.

Referring to the Harman variety and its inclination to grow in large umbrella form, Mr. Coolidge stated that it could be shaped up to form a perfect pyramid, which resists heavy winds and protects its body from the hot sun. In his estimation a great deal of fruiting space is gained by such treatment. He said he could show limbs two inches in diameter that had been pruned without any die-back. All Mr. Coolidge's pruning is done in the vigorous growing season. He says that he has known them to die back in many instances, when cut in the early spring or the fall. Questioned, he said he had never trimmed back a Taft or any of the other thick-skinned type. Mr. Whedon, who asked the above question, gave it as his experience that such treatment of first-class trees would cause them to die.

WORMS AS PRUNERS

To show a kind of instinctive tendency to control the wood and leaf growth, E. E. Knight of Yorba Linda described a system the Indians of Guatamala have of driving "Hear Me" worms (so called because they raise their heads when any one speaks) among the trees and shooing them up the trunks. He says they do all the pruning practiced there. Regarding his own experiences Mr. Knight stated that he had trimmed one of the hard-shell types with a view to demonstrating whether it would be killed by cutting back, and that it gave him no difficulty, but the rather heavy pruning produced a very beautifully shaped tree. He agreed with Mr. Coolidge that a tree could be pruned to give a large bearing space and still be kept in compact form. Comparing an unpruned tree with the pruned tree he found the former had enormous, long branches with two or three fruits in a space that should have a dozen or more. Small pruned trees furnish evidence to him that it is better to have compact trees with large bearing surface rather than the huge branches with little fruit space. The tendency to terminal growths to the exclusion of laterals should be controlled by cutting the terminal points. One eleven-year-old tree, thirty feet in height, with branches reaching the ground, yet having comparatively little bearing space, and a two or three-year-old tree pruned to throw out many lateral branches assisted him in reaching the above conclusion. The Meserve variety is

referred to.

In regard to shaping trees, Mr. Whedon said he has two trees, ten or twelve years old, that he clips for the purpose of shaping, and although he hasn't bound or waxed any of the cuts he has had no die-back.

As a result of his experience Mr. Hart stated that it was not well to generalize too much on the amount of pruning. "No two varieties," he said, "grow the same. I have something like fifteen varieties on my place." Some of the varieties he pruned very little and they developed in good shape. Others throw out such long branches that they leave the trunk exposed to be sunburned. Such trees must be pruned. He said his experience of the effect of pruning was very much in accord with that of Mr. Coolidge—prune a tree while growing and there is little chance of die back. His observation has led him to do his pruning in the early spring after the sap has come up and the tree has started to grow, but in advance of the summer heat. This method enables the tree to protect itself from the sun. Mr. Hart advocates pruning, preferably in the spring, or about the time of fall when the weather is cooler and the tree is still growing from the warmth in the ground. He considers it extremely necessary to prune some varieties in order to protect them and shape them up.

IRRIGATION

That the avocado needs thorough irrigation, even more perhaps than citrus trees, is an opinion expressed by Mr. Coolidge. He mentioned a four-year-old tree planted near a large hydrant from which water is taken for a considerable amount of nursery stock. Every two weeks that tree is flooded, and it produced 150 fruits this year. He stated that other trees of the same variety and practically the same age, planted near, but with less irrigation, were about two-thirds the size and much less vigorous, and that they produced not more than two-thirds as much fruit as the flooded tree. He believes that trees growing in light, sandy soil cannot get too much water in the growing season.

Mr. Knight planted a number of trees on a corner of one acre and gave them a double portion of water. These trees, he said, were planted in the summer, during the hot months, and were irrigated twice a week. His irrigation is done by means of tanks and the best tree is the one with the biggest tank. Mr. Knight stated the trees on the corner, receiving double portions of water, showed best results. His soil is a clay loam.

Mr. Whedon agreed with Mr. Coolidge and Mr. Knight as to copious irrigation in some soils, but referring to his own soil said if it were watered once a week it could not be walked on. He said his soil had been analyzed as clay loam the first foot, and the next five feet sandy clay, and that once a month would be ample irrigation for it.

A tree planted in his lawn and watered every morning with an automatic sprinkler was said to be the best tree its owner has.

FROST RESISTANCE

The question was asked whether it was safe to plant thick-skinned trees where lemons do "pretty well," where frost can be expected at about four-year intervals.

Dr. Coit, acting as chairman, thought it would require a very fine degree of judgment to answer the question satisfactorily, if such an answer could be given at all. The question

was referred to Mr. Taft, who answered that either type—the thick or the thin-skinned, might be planted, but that there is a great variation in the frost resistance of the different varieties. It is his judgment that the Taft will stand as much as any thick-skinned fruit, but not as much as some of the thin skins. Planting in such a locality, Mr. Taft said he would protect his trees for four or five years and then let them look out for themselves, just as he would with lemons, and he believes they would stand it as well as the lemons.

Mr. Whedon told of two seedling trees that he purchased in 1912, both Mexican varieties, one black and one green, the latter said to be very fine fruit. This was protected until it was four or five feet high, and when he last saw it, it was growing nicely. The black variety he did not protect, and the first heavy frost of 1913 killed it.

Regarding the frost resistance of the hard shells, Mr. Knight stated that he had seen them growing two thousand feet above the elevations where the hardiest thin-skinned avocado grows.

Mr. Hart resumed the chair and called attention to the fact that the Alexandria Hotel had furnished the rooms with all the beautiful fittings for the present meeting, that they had brought up the displays and had assisted in every way, giving exceptional assistance in the preparation of the samples of avocado, and all entirely without cost to the association. He said he would entertain a motion showing appreciation to the management of the hotel.

A motion was made to express the heartiest thanks of the California Avocado Association to the management of the Alexandria Hotel for the use of the rooms and the assistance rendered.

Motion seconded and unanimously carried. Meeting adjourned.