

CARE OF THE AVOCADO TREE FOR ONE YEAR AFTER LEAVING THE NURSERY

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Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Convention:

The following suggestions regarding the care of the young avocado tree are principally for amateurs who are about to plant their first avocado tree.

Do not be discouraged with your first attempt to grow one of the most delicious fruits in the world's market today. During the last few years of my observation on avocado planting I have noticed a great many ways of handling young trees just from the nursery, especially among amateur planters and some of them had great success, while others had just as great failures. In the first instance all of the credit was claimed by the planter; in the second, of course, the nurseryman was blamed, the trees being considered no good. Most of us know that not all of the nurserymen who sell avocado trees are angels, but, however, there are plenty of reliable firms, who are not only willing to sell good trees true to name, but will also give information regarding the planting and taking care of them, provided that the buyer can inform him as to the condition of the surface and subsoil in which he wishes to plant, and if possible the location.

It has been repeatedly stated that the avocado tree will stand all the water one can give it and the more given the better it will grow, but this is not true only under the right conditions, for it has also been proven that the avocado can be grown with very little irrigation. However, neither of the above statements should be used as a basis for planting young trees without first taking into consideration the local condition of the soil, be it for orchard or door-yard planting.

By far the best time to transplant young avocado trees just from the nursery is in the Spring as soon as the ground is warm enough to encourage root action, regardless of the fact that the stock was previously established in cans, boxes, or had been dug from a nursery row. Established plants, which have been kept in the open for some little time before planting will require no special protection upon planting, but plants which have been kept in a lath-house or shade of other nature should be protected for the first few months from the strong sun's rays. If no protection is given and a few warm days should follow the planting the tender foliage would become burned and even the soft bark would be cooked. Young trees, which have been growing in the nursery row, upon being dug and balled should be placed in a shady place, either under a tree, a shade house, or the like, so as to get over the shock of transplanting as soon as possible, and when planting out such trees, it is much better to shade them for the first few months.

Small budded trees to 2 feet high are usually taken up without pruning back the tops, but larger trees, two to five! years old will have to be pruned back severely so that they

can be handled in small boxes. It is these trees which are liable to sunburn very easily and not only the leaves, but the soft limbs as well. Besides having a little shade to protect them it is well to whitewash the trunks and limbs.

If young avocado trees are planted in sandy or loamy soil with no hard-pan for subsoil, a hole about three feet in diameter, or square, if you prefer, and three feet deep should be ample to give it a good start. If convenient and means are at hand the planting of avocado trees in poor soil should be as follows: Dig a hole three feet deep, place in the bottom twelve to eighteen inches of manure, if possible well decayed, tramp down firmly, place from six to eight inches of surface soil on top of the manure and firm down, then place the tree and fill in with surface soil. Use the soil which comes from the bottom of the hole to make the basin around the tree for irrigating. If old compost is to be had a good plan is to use it half and half with the soil for back-filling the hole, but it is not advisable to use fresh, strong manure, or commercial fertilizer too close to the roots. If the soil is light and has good drainage there will be no danger of over watering, but if heavy clay or adobe soil is present the hole should be dug even larger than above mentioned and old compost should be mixed thoroughly with the soil in back-filling, which will act as a good pulverizer. Any layers of hard-pan should be well broken up and this can sometimes be easily done by the use of powder. The irrigation of trees planted in heavy soil is more of a trick than that of those planted in light soil, in other words it is possible to completely drown the trees. Some clay and adobe soils are very slow in allowing the water to penetrate, and under such conditions, if irrigated too often without examining the soil, as to its need, you will form a death trap for the newly planted tree, because the loose soil which has been used in back-filling will take up a great amount of water and with insufficient drainage for the surplus the soil is apt to get sour. Such soil not only prevents the growth of the young roots, but injures the old ones as well and soon the tree takes on a yellow look and very often dies.

To sum it up all that is really necessary in planting the young avocado tree is to take into consideration the local conditions and then use common sense in the application of water. If the young trees have been shipped any distance and have become dry in transit or from any other cause, they should be thoroughly watered before planting.

In making basins for summer irrigation it is a great mistake to make the funnel or crater-like affair with its lowest point directly around the trunk of the tree; it is much better to make a circular ditch around the tree, leaving at least six inches of high ground around the trunk of the tree and as the tree grows the basin should be made proportionately larger. All basins should have some sort of a mulch covering to keep the moisture from evaporating and at the same time to protect the ground from baking.

All young trees should have a stake, for the first year at least, placed on the south to southwest side to act as part shade for the trunk. If the trees are planted during the dry summer months it is advisable to fill the holes with water before planting, which not only gives reserve moisture in the bottom but helps in determining the condition of the subsoil as to drainage by the length of time it takes to disappear.