

Handling Methods

The Exchange is constantly investigating various methods of grading, packing, shipping, retarding ripening, etc.

Grading.—Before the growers' fruit is pooled it is graded, first as to variety. Each variety is segregated. Second, as to quality. Only unscarred fruit of regular shape is placed in the first grade. Second grade fruit consists of slightly scarred, slightly irregular fruit. Badly scarred and badly deformed fruits are put in the culls. Culls form a very small proportion of the total deliveries, less than one-half of 1 per cent. Thirdly, the fruit is graded according to size—small, medium and large.

Packing.—Tests of packing material have demonstrated the superiority of ordinary coarse wood excelsior over paper excelsior, paper or wraps. The Exchange is constantly on the lookout for any packing material which may prove to be better than excelsior. The requisites for a good packing material are coolness and ventilation.

Containers.—After experimenting with many types of boxes, the Exchange has adopted: A special lug 17 1/2 in. x 13 3/4 in. x 7 1/4 in., with plenty of air space between the slats—this lug holds two dozen medium to large fruit; a half lug 17 1/2 in. x 13 3/4 in. x 4 1/2 in- for one dozen large fruit or two dozen small fruit; a flat 17 1/2 in. x 11 1/2 in. x 2 3/4 in- for one dozen medium fruit.

Smaller containers for one, three and six fruits, respectively.

The shook used in these containers is chiefly of standard cuts.

Retarding Ripening.—The Exchange has experimented with several types of wax and oil coatings designed to retard the natural process of ripening; none of these experiments has proven successful, but they will be continued until definitely proven or disproven.

Refrigeration.—Most of the Florida avocados are shipped in iced crates. The iced crate is apparently successful, but very expensive. The Exchange is seeking to avoid this expense by shipping via Refrigerator Express wherever possible. Pony refrigerators have been used successfully with other fruits and may prove to be desirable for avocados, when the refrigerator express is not available.

Cold Storage.—The University of California is conducting experiments in the cold storage of avocados. To date the available information indicates that very thick skinned avocados may be stored at temperatures as low as 38 deg. F. for a few weeks, and that the thinner skinned fruits such as the Fuerte may be kept for about three weeks at 45 deg. F. Experiments will be continued, but it is apparent that the fruit keeps much better on the tree than under any other conditions.

Marking the Avocados.—Stamps, stickers, wraps, labels and other forms of marking are resorted to for the identification of most fruits.

The Exchange is experimenting with all known forms of marking in an effort to work out a practical, economical method of marking avocados so that buyers can identify the brand and variety of fruit that they are buying.

Standardization.—The Exchange is continually having analyzed fruits of different varieties in different degrees of maturity, in order to lay the foundation for a thorough Standardization Law.

Avocado Thefts.—The Exchange is on the lookout for stolen avocados in an effort to apprehend avocado thieves who are operating on a wholesale basis, in some cases completely stripping groves of their fruit, both mature and immature, and who are flooding the local market with stolen goods at ridiculously low prices. The apprehension of thieves can be greatly facilitated if growers will promptly notify the Exchange of all thefts, giving the time, quantity of fruit, varieties, condition, how picked and all other available information.

By-Products

The Exchange is co-operating with the University of California in the investigation of possible byproducts. To date all results have been negative; it appears that the avocado does not lend itself readily to preservation or dehydration. Further experiments are being conducted in Honolulu with a view to manufacturing commercial avocado oil.

Quarantine

The Exchange is doing everything it can to further the investigation of avocado pests that might be introduced into California with a view to fostering protective quarantines.

GEO. B. HODGKIN,
Secretary-Manager.