

California Avocado Association 1932 Yearbook 17: 27-28

Avocado Varieties

Dr. J. Eliot Coit

Outline of address delivered at Carlsbad Dec. 17, 1931, under the auspices of Oceanside High School.

There are three races or groups of avocados: Guatemalan, Mexican and West Indian. The latter, being commonly known as Alligator Pears, are grown in tropical countries. We in California are concerned only with the Guatemalan and Mexican.

All varieties originate as seedlings, which become varieties after they have been named, propagated, and distributed under the name. Of the sixteen leading varieties in California, eight are local seedlings, four were introduced from foreign countries by the United States Department of Agriculture, and four were introduced from abroad by private individuals.

The variety committee of the California Avocado Association has each year, for a number of years, published a list of recommended varieties. A serious effort was made to keep this list small in order to bring about more uniformity of plantings and pave the way for standardization of product. Within recent years, the recommended list has been divided into several, such as commercial, amateur, and frost-resistant varieties. Now the tendency is toward still greater segregation along the line of special adaptation to districts with reference to differing climatic conditions. Production scores are worked out by growers and marketability by a large number of salesmen who distribute fruit to the dealers. The relative position of varieties on the lists changes from year to year as more and more is learned about them.

Increasing competition in Eastern markets in certain seasons of the year with fruit grown in Cuba and Florida must be taken into consideration in deciding what varieties to plant in commercial quantities in California.

Taking everything into consideration, it is my feeling that as far as the Fallbrook-Vista-Escondido-La Mesa districts are concerned, the Fuerte should continue as the backbone of the industry.

New planters in these districts would make no mistake in planting all Fuertes. However, if they wish to extend the season, Nabal and Benik are at present the next best. Along the South Coast, Fuerte does not produce as satisfactorily as in the foothills, but even there a large number of Fuertes will be planted, but with an increasing proportion of Nabal, Benik and Itzamna. Little is yet known about the marketability of the Itzamna, but we do know that its season of maturity brings it into full competition with the Florida crop. As our production increases, we must depend more and more on the great

markets in the East to absorb our main crop, and at prices higher than they are accustomed to pay for Cuban and Florida fruit.

Until this year the Puebla has been fairly satisfactory on the markets, and it is already in large production. However, during November of 1931, the Puebla reacted badly to weather conditions and began to show unattractive dark stains in the flesh. This has caused a lot of trouble on the market.

Among the promising new varieties which should be experimented with are Marion, Leonard, Leucadia, and Duke; the first three on the Coast and the last in somewhat frosty sections of the foothills and interior.

While we do not need a long list of commercially grown avocados, we should always seek improvement. Everyone should be interested in testing and studying seedlings. In order to avoid confusion, the Avocado Association will, without charge, test samples of fruit and issue certificates of registration for suitable names suggested by the owners. Registration of promising seedlings is highly desirable because it prevents duplication of names, gives needed publicity, promotes cooperative study through local Farm Bureau variety committees, identifies the particular seedling in any group of seedlings, and reduces the time required to determine its actual worth. While a good variety may originate as a chance seedling anywhere and from any kind of seed, the likelihood of getting good fruit is greatly increased by planting only the seeds of good Guatemalans such as Lyon, Taft, and Nabal.