

The Avocado Pear or Alligator Pear in Jamaica

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Woodfield, Walker s Wood, Jamaica, B. W. I.

The above names refer to one and the same fruit in Jamaica. It has been commonly called "Pear," but "Avocado Pear" is coming to be more generally used by the educated classes. The name "Alligator Pear" here refers to a particular variety which has a very long neck which is crooked like some of the gourds. I have seen only one tree of this variety, which is dead now. It used to be on my father's property when I was a small child (40 years ago) and with us children it was considered much better than the other avocados we had. Probably this was due to its curious shape, as in later years I know there were two other trees whose fruit cannot be beaten in quality.

So far there has been no systematic planting of avocados in Jamaica, nor has there been any investigation or development of any kind looking toward the production of fruit for commercial purposes.

The avocado grows and does well in most parts of this island. Some people may plant a seed here and there, but the most of the planting- has been left to nature. Wherever a seed has been thrown and grows it is allowed to remain as the native people will never destroy a fruit tree of any kind. That is why the small native holdings are, in 99 cases out of 100, merely jungles of all sorts of fruit trees.

The season for avocados in Jamaica is from about the middle of July to the middle of December.

About the year 1925 I saw in a catalog of Reasoner Bros, of Oneco, Florida, a list of grafted avocado nursery stock, and noted that the season of maturity of the fruit as given, differed from ours. After thinking about this it struck me that by securing some of these varieties and growing other races such as the Guatemalan and Mexican that we might lengthen our season considerably. Accordingly, in 1927 I imported two plants each of Eagle Rock and Lula. Between the time that I imported these four plants and the present our Agricultural Society became interested in avocados and it imported some plants from Florida which arrived in the Island just after the Government prohibited the importation of plants on account of the Mediterranean fruit fly in Florida. These plants were burned when they arrived. I waited hoping that the embargo would be lifted, but so far it has not been.

In 1931 I obtained permission from the Government to import plants from Armstrong Nursery at Ontario, California. From there I received Fuerte, Dickinson, Dutton and Prince. These trees all lived but are growing very slowly, and have not yet flowered. The Eagle Rock does not grow well and the Lulu is subject to scab and I fear that neither of these will be of any value.

During the period from 1927 to date I have been collecting the best Jamaica seedling

varieties and budding them here. I am now growing eleven different kinds, three of which I consider very good. In regard to pollination, two of them are classed as A group and one B' group. One of the A trees I have named "C. L. W." The B variety is named "Friendship" and matures from August to the middle of November. The other A variety I have named "Mother Wilmot" and it comes in from the end of October to the middle of December.

In 1929 I purchased a piece of land where I have planted out seven acres to seeds placed 20 by 30 feet apart, and am budding these to C. L. W. and Mother Wilmot. My reason for not budding to Friendship is because of the great difficulty of getting these buds to take. Up to date I have only been able to get one bud to take. In 1930 I planted out an additional eight acres to seeds which it is my present intention to bud to C. L. W.

I have not been very successful with my budding, and so my orchard is very patchy, only having gotten about 33% into good growth so far. But I will get it done in the end though the trees will not all be the same size on account of differences in age; but I am improving as I learn more about it.

This is as far as the avocado industry has progressed in Jamaica; I being the pioneer in any sort of system of planting.

There has been some shipment of avocados from Jamaica to both Canada and England, but I do not think they have been very profitable.