

Avocado Acclimatization in Palestine

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Avocado culture in Palestine started with the importation in the Spring of 1926 from California of 8 Grafted trees four of each of the following varieties: 1). Fuerte 2). Dickinson. The shipment reached us in good shape and the trees were set out in two localities in the heart of the Citrus belt at a distance of about 6 miles from the Coast. The trees were planted in a deep sandy clay, in a district well protected from winds and given proper care. Judging by their healthy appearance and rapid development we might assume that they had the necessary requirements in the proper environment.

Only in the past two years could we notice a continual growth and a constant striving appearance when the first blossoms were noticed and soon after on the Dickinson numerous nicely shaped fruit were set. The Fuerte that season did not show as much fertility, nor did its fruit develop as uniformly. Part of it was exceptionally large, the rest exceedingly small. The years after, the blossoming turned to be more normal on the Fuerte and less regular with the Dickinson. The truth is that both varieties blossomed excessively but the fruit itself developed better and in larger quantities on the Fuerte than the Dickinson.

AN UNKNOWN FRUITING DEMAND

Not knowing exactly when the fruit was ripe, it was picked the first year when still partly green. Part of that was shipped to France where it arrived in excellent condition, but was received very coldly as no one there knew how to use it. Those that we kept here for further observation were simply forced on various friends but of those who were willing to make the sacrifice and taste the new fruit a good number were well impressed.

Consequently in 1929 several more trees of various varieties were imported from Florida. At the same time seed for local nurseries was also ordered.

The trees this time arrived in Summer and did not start growth as well. They, however, served as bud-wood for the nursery stock raised locally and which developed very nicely.

Among the successful varieties thus raised should be mentioned the: Anaheim, Dickinson, Duke, Fuerte, Nabal, Northop, Puebla, Taft. But of all these as far as regular yield goes and proper development of fruit the Fuerte stands first. With regard to development of tree and healthy appearance the Dickinson remained the leader. None of the trees showed any suffering from diseases but what they cannot resist is our "Khamsin"¹, an Eastern hot wind which rages during the blossoming period and damages the major part of the fruit. Because of this wind we doubt whether the avocado

will ever become here a commercial fruit. Besides the winds the fruit is attacked by the Mediterranean Fruit Fly (*Ceratitis capitata*) so that whatever escapes the winds is as yet not sure to ripen. It is for this reason that the Fuerte which ripens between January and April is in more favorable condition than the varieties that ripen during the summer months when the fly is more common.

In conclusion the avocado tree under our Palestine conditions grows very nicely and hardly suffers from any disease. Its main enemies are the winds during its blossoming period and the Mediterranean Fruit Fly while on the tree. Unless we can introduce varieties that will blossom early (these winds rage mostly in Spring) and find means to exterminate the Fruit Fly we will not be able to raise avocados on an economic basis. This in spite of the fact that all other conditions seem to be ideal for its growth and development.