

Avocado Tree Decline

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We have observed a number of avocado trees which have shown alarming decline, particularly on hillside and bench land plantings in soils which are shallow or underlain with compact subsoil, or bedrock which may prevent free drainage of excess moisture. Upon examining affected trees one may find cankerous areas in the bark of the lower trunk and the root crown. A large per cent of the feeder roots have died in such cases.

For treatment the following is effective in most instances: Dig the dirt away from the root crown and expose the upper main roots to the air for about a foot away from the trunk. Leave the hole open. Cut tree back in proportion to the amount of decline. Regulate amount of soil moisture carefully. The grower is faced with the dilemma of possible injury to the roots if he follows his usual practice of irrigation, and if he does not supply some moisture the trees will be apt to suffer, particularly if the root zone is shallow. Some growers have solved this problem by the use of low-head portable sprinkler systems which permit regulation of moisture application -within narrow limits, and they have followed a program of spot irrigation of affected trees with light applications of water with sufficient frequency to meet the needs of the trees. Sometimes it is necessary to give more frequent applications of water after the tree has started recovery and is developing a new set of leaves.