

REPORT OF THE AVOCADO VARIETY COMMITTEE OF THE CALIFORNIA AVOCADO SOCIETY

Oliver Atkins

Chairman

The freeze of December 20 and 21, 1968 was among the most severe of all time to hit the California avocado industry. In view of this the Variety Committee scheduled a joint meeting with the C.A.S. Board of Directors and the C.A.S. Nurserymen's section March 7 in Fallbrook, one of the hardest hit areas. The purpose being to review the effects of the freeze on various avocado varieties.

The frost limitations on the recommended variety list compiled by the C.A.S. Variety Committee in 1966 were borne out by observing these trees in various degrees of damage. The following comments are noteworthy however.

The Bacon trees observed were outstanding in their ability to endure a severe freeze. Much of the fruit could also be salvaged after a freeze.

The Zutano tree in comparison suffered severe damage. The fruit from the Zutano showers down from the chill shock after a freeze and very little can be salvaged.

The Hass trees suffered severe damage. However, the brown stem fruit from partially frost-damaged trees has a remarkable ability to hang on and repair itself and be salvaged later.

The Fuerte trees observed were hardy in resistance to frost. The brown stem fruit also hung good and a high percentage was salvaged later. However it should be remembered that the Fuerte even when receiving slight frost damage does not bloom well nor set a good crop the following season.

The Wurtz variety in the Fallbrook area showed a remarkable resistance to the freeze. However this variety has other limitations and should not be planted extensively.

The Reed trees showed about the same frost damage as the Hass.

The general consensus of those present was that the industry would be better off if frost-damaged fruit could be withheld or diverted to by-products. However, there is no manner, other than by voluntary sacrifice, in which growers could be reimbursed for their frost damaged fruit. It is evident that this problem will face us again in future freezes.

Another joint meeting was held July 11th at the South Coast Field Station near El Toro. The purpose being to observe Dr. Bergh's seedling progeny of Hass and other spring fruiting varieties. Many of these seedlings and crosses show considerable promise. The Variety Committee recommends that the University of California should be encouraged to continue this experimental planting and breeding program.

During the year, two chance seedlings were submitted for registration, one by James B. Nugent of Whittier and another by R. C. Mathes of Escondido. The Variety Committee will keep these under observation and evaluate them. The Society Variety Committee wishes to encourage the reporting of any new varieties or chance seedlings showing promise for registration and observation.

Our policy will be to observe and test these new varieties over a period of years on an experimental scale and to avoid commercial scale planting until they have been proven. Hasty favorable publicity without adequate testing has caused many inferior varieties in the past to be propagated and planted. Cooperation between nurserymen and the Variety Committee recommendations will help solve this problem in the future.