

Williams Avocado Tree

Bob Whitsell¹, Alvin Lypps², and Bob Bergh³

1, 3: *Botany and Plant Sciences Department. University of California, Riverside;* 2: *nurseryman, Hemet.*

At 29931 Camino Capistrano, on the outskirts of San Juan Capistrano, is a seedling avocado tree about 80 feet tall. It measures 167½ inches around the trunk 3 feet up from the ground, and so has a diameter of about 4 feet 5 inches (Figure 1). The property owner is Charles R. Williams.



Figure 1. The trunk of the Williams avocado tree, with Alvin Lypps.

According to his brother, William R. "Randy" Williams, who earlier managed the ranch that included this property, the tree was planted in 1917 by their father. The tree was brought to the ranch by Allen Miller Smith from the J. H. Northrop ranch in Tustin. It was part of avocado experimentation being conducted by Mr. Northrop (for whom the Northrop variety is named).

The tree flourished over the years, producing great quantities of Mexican race seedling fruit which resembled Mexicola with an even larger seed (Figure 2).

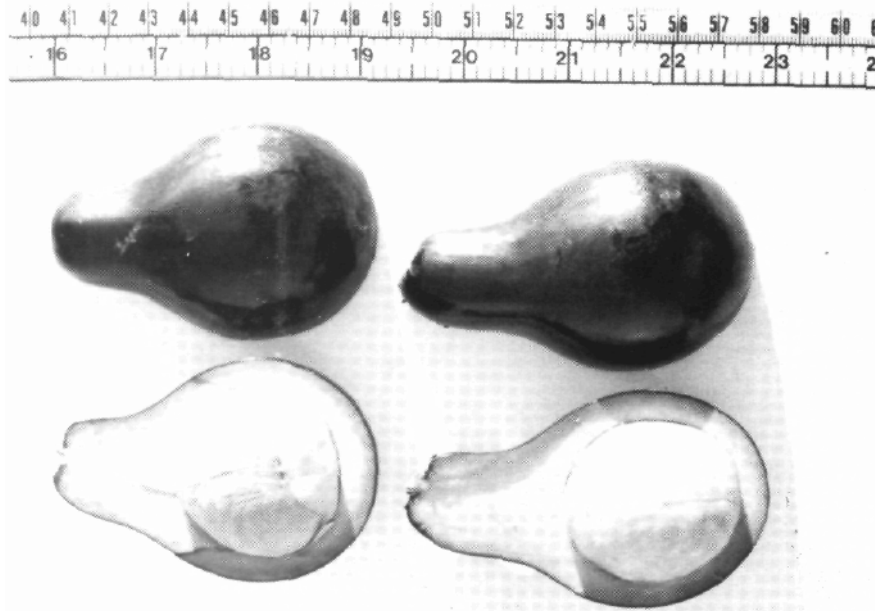


Figure 2. Fruits of the Williams avocado.

Because it was very productive, produced no sun-blotched seedlings, and produced vigorous seedling trees comparable to Topa Topa, several nurserymen used seed from it for growing avocado rootstocks over a period of about 30 years. Among these nurserymen were Alvin Marshburn and Richey Barnett, of Orange County; Bill Frey of Escondido; Horace Stevens, Jr., of Pauma Valley; and Alvin Lypps, of Hemet. Lypps used seed from the tree for several years, paying as much as \$200 for the whole crop.

The fruit of this Williams tree is certainly too small, and the seed too large, for it to be a commercial variety. But it is of interest as a rootstock source because of its huge production. Its seedlings have proven uniformly vigorous. And they will be tested for possible root-rot resistance.

For example, during the September-November season of 1964, Lypps removed 14,000 fruit from the tree. At least 600 more fruit were on the ground at that time. Even in years of poor production, the tree has about 6,000 fruit. The crop this past year was about 8,000 fruit.

The great size and productivity of this Williams tree are due partly to its inherent genetics; it sprang from strong ancestry. They were made possible also by superior environment: the tree has obviously had good care, especially irrigation. And it is growing in a deep, rich, silty, alluvial soil, the deposit of a nearby creek overflowing for millennia. Other trees nearby are also large and flourishing, including a Fuerte and two Northrop trees. Root growth of trees in this area appears to be excellent; an old orange tree in a grove close by was removed and proved to have a tap root measuring 22 feet long.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We wish to thank Mr. Randy Williams of Lacey, Washington, for kindly providing us with some of this information.