

OUR EXPERIENCES IN GROWING THE AVOCADO

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We rather hesitated to prepare this brief paper on "Our Experience in Growing the Avocado," to be read at the Third Semi-Annual meeting of the California Avocado Association for the reason that we are mere novices in this line of horticulture; however, we are glad to give what little experience we have had so far in the growing of the avocado tree.



Figure 31.—Avocado tree ready to be planted; note roots protruding through sacking.

The location of our 5-acre avocado grove is on Arlington Heights about eight miles south of the city of Riverside at an elevation of about 1100 feet above sea level. The soil is a mixture of decomposed and disintegrated granite and reddish clay of a good depth.

The drainage is good as on the southerly and westerly side of the avocado grove there is a deep arroyo into which is drained the surplus irrigation and storm water.

The trees are planted 24x24 feet apart and are made up of the following varieties,—Harman, Northrop and Taft, about one-third of each, and from one to nine each of the following were also planted as more or less of an experiment,—Solano, Redondo, Chappelow, Puebla, Walker Prolific, Meserve, Ganter, Colorado, Dickinson, Grande, Fowler and Atlixco.

We also planted about an acre to the Dickey variety but for some reason the trees did not do well and practically all of the trees of this variety have been replaced with another variety.

The trees that have made the most vigorous growth are those in the following order,—Northrop, Harman, Taft. The land upon which these trees are planted was thoroughly plowed to a good depth, then leveled, so that the water would flow at a reasonable rate of speed while the trees were being irrigated, thus assuring good drainage for all the trees.

The holes to receive the trees were dug somewhat larger than is generally the custom in digging holes for citrus trees, (See Fig. 31), thus giving ample room for the roots to extend in the loose soil. The trees were then carefully planted and irrigated (See Fig. 32) in the same manner as that employed in planting citrus trees. After the trees were planted we protected them from the hot sun by a covering of cheese cloth supported by four stakes, (See Fig. 33).

For the first season after planting the trees were irrigated about every eight days for a period of two months and the time was gradually extended between irrigations according to advice from the West India Gardens. The next season they were irrigated as often as the condition of the soil required irrigation in order to secure best results in the growth of the trees, or on an average of about every 30 to 40 days during the irrigating season.

The soil has been cultivated in the ordinary manner and while possibly a little more care was given to the irrigation and cultivation of the avocado grove as compared with the citrus grove yet the trees were not "nursed" or "coddled" if I may use these terms.

Last February we pruned a few rows of the avocado trees and endeavored to lift the branches off the ground.

We also pruned some in March; we cannot see that it did much good as the branches are all down to the ground again and while a good many trees looked misshapen in the spring, this fall they have put out new branches and filled up the spaces, and in discussing the question of pruning with others we think that until some definite system for pruning has been settled upon it looks as if we will be very slow to do much pruning. Where we made any cut we waxed the same so that there would be no chance of the branch dying back.

Last April we noticed that the avocado trees in our section dropped a large percentage of their old leaves; this was the first time that they had done so and to a novice it certainly looked as if something had gone wrong with the trees but in the course of a month or six weeks the trees looked better than ever.



Figure 32.—System of irrigating the avocado tree thoroughly.

As to the results secured,—the trees are, we think, silent spokesmen for themselves, and in order to give those interested in the development of the avocado an idea of the present size of the trees we have taken a few snap shots of them which we have attached to this paper. (See Fig. 34).

We have been told by those far better qualified to judge than we are that our trees have made an exceptionally good growth and equal to any of the trees planted for the same length of time. The bulk of our trees were planted in the month of May, 1914, making them about two and one-half years old from the planting in the orchard to Nov. 1916.

It may be interesting to note that there are quite a large percentage of the trees of the Northrop variety which have from one to a dozen or more fruits on them this season and we are placing a few of these fruits on exhibition. Half a dozen or so of the other varieties, Puebla, Grande, etc., have a very few sample fruits this season.

We are naturally very much interested in the development of the avocado industry as we think there ought to be a large demand for the fruit if it is brought to the attention of the consuming public in a proper and intelligent manner and while it is more or less of an experiment with us we have confidence that the product can be marketed in such manner as to give the producer a reasonable profit on the investment and at the same time give the consumer a fruit of considerable food value at a reasonable cost.



Figure 33.—Method of Protecting Trees.



Figure 34.—Two year old Northrop tree, approximate height 11 to 12 feet.