

THINNING AVOCADOS

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The subject of thinning avocados is so new that I shall only try to tell what I, myself, have done.

During the season of 1925 some of my Fuerte trees had so much fruit that certain trees were severely injured, as all their energy was expended in producing the fruit I have noticed that very heavy crops one year mean short crops the year following. When the tree bore too much, the fruits would not be large enough to grade as first class, and the returns would not be as great as from a less number of fruits of larger size. Also the tree does not do so well.

With the idea in mind of producing as many first grade fruits as possible every year, this season I thinned my Fuertes about 50 per cent. I tried to leave all the fruit on a limb which it would reasonably carry. Where two fruits were on one stem, the poorer one was removed, and all fruits with any imperfections were removed, as well as those which were rubbing on limbs.

This was done late in July, later than it should have been done. The work was delayed because there is usually a hot spell early in July that often causes a heavy drop of some varieties. So little is known of thinning avocados that I approach the task with fear and trembling, not knowing what the tree has in mind in regard to doing some thinning on its own account, but I am convinced that with me it will be necessary to thin the Fuerte. My Spinks, Dickinson and Lyon thinned themselves all they should, but the Fuerte did not drop many. I thought at the time we were doing the thinning that later on perhaps more of the Fuertes might drop, but they did not and at the present time I still have Fuertes with too much fruit. Another year I intend to adopt the plan of Mr. Henry A. Stearns of Pasadena, and begin thinning early, and go over the trees several times.

One point to be kept in mind is that the production of the seed is a greater drain on the tree than the pulp of the young fruit, and whatever thinning is done should be done before the seeds are well formed or the fruits attain considerable size.

With the varieties which drop much fruit by themselves, it is to my mind a doubtful question whether or not the situation would be bettered by hand thinning early in the season; some experiments would be required to determine if they would continue to drop more fruit after thinning, or if the added expense of hand thinning would be offset by a more uniform crop of large fruit.

Regarding the care of avocado trees when bearing heavy crops, the writer of this paper had not counted on making any extended remarks, but as to irrigation he is of the opinion that the trees should not be treated like the Irishman's pig, which was given his fill one day and starved the next so as to produce pork with a streak of fat and a streak

of lean; in other words, as nearly an even amount of moisture as possible should be maintained, and the trees, not be allowed to get dry between irrigations.

Fertiliser is something that should not be overlooked and one is not apt to go astray by the use of barnyard or dairy fertiliser. However, a grain of caution should be observed in the use of chemical fertiliser such as nitrate of soda and ammonium sulphate, or commercial fertilisers rich in nitrates, as it is possible to overdo the matter.