

COMMENTS ON VARIETIES

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The avocado is a tree introduced into Southern California from tropical and sub-tropical America; therefore, soil, climate, and water play a very important part in the growth of the tree. These same factors also determine, to a great extent, the quality and quantity of the fruit.

The cool tablelands, the warm lowlands and the temperate valleys of Mexico and Guatemala have all furnished their share of the 500 miscellaneous varieties of avocados now growing in this state.

We are planting trees oftentimes, regardless of their origin, in places foreign to their natural requirements and then we expect them to flourish. It's a little too much to expect a tree native to a high plateau in Guatemala to thrive when planted in the Vaga where the cool ocean breezes make the lima bean and the lemon famous, or a tree from the tropical lowlands to grow marketable fruits in our arid interior.

It would seem then that before a man plants an avocado orchard he should make a careful study of the soil and climatic conditions of the particular spot in which he intends to make his investment. Also he should become familiar with what constitutes a marketable fruit.

Marketability is determined (according to the Report of Variety Committee, Page 169, 1930 Association Year Book) by "the size, shape, color and appearance of a variety together with its ability to endure harvesting, handling, packing, shipping, cold storage, distribution, exposure at retail and still give sufficient consumer satisfaction to bring repeat orders and build up the industry."

Added to these qualifications we can add season of maturity.

Only a few out of these 500 varieties can qualify under the specifications for a marketable fruit. These few belong to the calavo type. I will comment briefly on a few of the best known of this group.

The **Fuerte** is the most outstanding in this group. The tree does well most anywhere in Southern California where conditions are favorable for growing citrus. Tree growth is excellent, but production poor on some of the deep rich coastal soils, and in places where seasonal climatic conditions approach the warmth and humidity of the sub-tropics this fruit is subject to fungus diseases that seriously interfere with its keeping qualities. It apparently reaches its perfection in the protected sunny slopes a few miles back from

the ocean. This variety is distributed over such a wide territory and the fruit has been commercially marketed long enough so that any prospective planter should be able to get full information as to his probable success if he wishes to plant Fuertes.

The **Puebla** has been a valuable stabilizer to our marketing program maturing somewhat earlier than the Fuerte. Although this variety hasn't quite the range of the Fuerte still, in general it thrives wherever the Fuerte is. The summer and fall of the year 1931 have been extremely hot and this has brought the Puebla to market a month early, which fact has made it necessary to sell this fruit in the East in competition with the Cuban and Florida's, which are still selling in great quantities. The Puebla is a marketable variety. However, as the Fuerte production increases the Puebla becomes less desirable.

The **Taft** to date is our most valuable late summer and fall fruit, marketability excellent, production alternate years. The Variety Committee of San Diego does not recommend the Taft very highly, and it comes into bearing very late in Orange County.

The best trees and most excellent fruit are produced in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties four or five miles back from the ocean in ideal orchard soil and climate. While the tree conies into bearing rather late and produces alternate crops, it is hoped that growers will continue in their efforts to propagate a superior producing strain.

The **Lyon**, just the opposite of the Taft in tree growth and production, is a tall slender tree and precocious to a fault. There is no better fruit grown, but so far the Lyon has been a poor investment because of the weakness and short life of the trees.

The **Anaheim** thrives and produces from Santa Barbara to San Diego. It bears a large green fruit of good eating quality but of poor to fair marketability. The season during which it has good keeping qualities is very short. This fruit's popularity is decreasing. This fruit is not on the calavo list.

The **Challenge** is a remarkably vigorous and productive tree. Parent tree is growing in Hollywood and this variety has been quite extensively planted, although very little planting has been done during the last few years. Production and quality are excellent in Ventura and Orange counties and poor inland. Fruit has fair marketability, but is large and black and comes directly in competition with the Fuerte and suffers accordingly. Keen competition is making it hard for the Challenge.

The **Dickinson** is one of the old stand-bys, but is losing out as evidence accumulates as to the marketability of the different varieties. After all is said and done if a fruit won't travel to New York or Chicago and give satisfaction to the average consumer, it must eventually be eliminated.

An excellent tree and a consistent producer. This variety grows a fruit of good eating quality but oftentimes has such a hard shell that it is difficult for the purchaser to know when it is ready to eat. The result is that it is not an industry builder. The statement has been made that it is advisable to plant this variety in localities where it produces heavily and the Fuerte does not.

It seems to me that there is very little evidence to prove the wisdom of a planting program that would burden an industry with a fruit that has consistently depressed the market.

There is a place for a limited quantity of a very early Mexican fruit of good size and good eating and keeping quality. This is proven by the fact that the Topa Topa, a fruit that has only looks and season of maturity to recommend it, has to date been a profitable variety.

These comments are made with the hope that those planting new orchards may be induced to consider carefully some of the requirements of success in the growing of avocados.