

Hawaii Yearns for Mainland Markets

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The avocado or "alligator pear" is sometimes referred to as "Hawaii's Green-Gold," although the precious metal itself is unknown here and the Federal horticultural quarantine regulations forbid our shipping the fruit to the mainland markets, because it is alleged to be a fruit-fly carrier.

I happen to know that Mexican fruit-flies are already pretty well established in Southern California as far north as Los Angeles—a fact of the not-for-publication order but true, notwithstanding. The Federal horticultural embargo against Hawaii's fruit still holds. [The author is evidently misinformed. There are not and never have been any fruit flies affecting the avocado in California. See article by Mr. Fleury, page 57. (Editor.)]

If our pear orchardists were allowed to ship their output to the continental United States, the "Green-Gold" appellation would be correct. There would be nothing to prevent making the avocado industry as commercially important as sugar.

A small group of scientific orchardists who have lifted the beginnings of this industry out of the ruck are doing invaluable preliminary research work which should redound to their financial credit, later on. It has been costly pioneering because of the time element and the limitations on marketing.

BEAR IN THIRD YEAR

Young grafted trees begin bearing the third year after they are transplanted, yield moderate returns the fourth year, and get into full bearing at six years. Their fruition cycle is like that of coffee and macadamia nuts, the only commercial orchard crops well established here, barring oranges. Our citrus trees seldom get much care or cultivation.

An orchard takes time to grow. One must not only have faith but enough capital, and the use of very cheap land. These tree-crops cannot afford to pay high rentals and taxes for the first five years when the money is going out, bringing little back in the way of cash returns.

One morning last week I went out to Waimea to see an orchard which is commencing to show results and may be the forerunner of a sizeable industry. It is owned by the Hawaiian Avocado Co., Ltd. Too small as yet to be called a plantation, there is no doubt that it has great possibilities.

The company owns 180 acres of cane, pasture or pineapple land, once a part of the

Pupukea Homesteads on the plateau directly above the old Winsted stone crusher, about 700 feet above sea-level. It is fairly level land, sloping towards the west, with moderately deep gulches leading up into the tract and is near enough to the Koolau range to fall heir to the light trade wind showers which drift across the north end of Oahu from Kahuku towards Wahiawa. The drainage is good.

160 ACRES PLANTED

The company has planted about 160 acres in 14 varieties of pears, all grafted stock. Ten acres of four-year-old trees will come into full bearing by 1935 and ten acres of trees two and three years old commenced yielding a few fruits this year. The remaining 140 acres are set with young trees up to 18 months old.

The company has been experimenting with avocados long enough to find out a great many very practical points, such as that although clean intercultivation is desirable, the roots must not be disturbed. The young trees are surrounded with a circle of mulch as soon as planted, subsequent cultivation being to pile the mulch deeper around the trunks.

The trees are not pruned up to a head but are allowed to branch at the foot, making a sprawling, bushy growth, near the ground, more like a lot of young hau trees. Alvin P. Haley, sales manager of the company, who has lived in Panama, says that is its natural habit in Central America, its native country. Also, that the trees there are always mulched, as the feeding roots are at the surface of the ground and must not be disturbed.

These enthusiasts are having the usual "Pioneer's Luck." They have something which is destined to be big and will be big if the important interests here will act concertedly to secure an open door for Hawaiian avocados, into the northern markets.

As I have implied, the necessity for a Federal horticultural embargo against Hawaiian fruits and vegetables is less acute than it appeared twenty years ago when the original regulations were formulated. Fruit-flies are less feared.

PRE-SHIPMENT METHODS

Also, more is known about pre-shipment methods of handling perishables, to rid them of insect pests, through carbon dioxide gassing, quick-freezing and other methods of treatment. There are modern ways of handling fruit shipments to make them safe, as is instanced by the recent modifications in the embargoes which formerly prevented the importations of fresh fruit from South America, South Africa and Australia.

The thing can be done if our powerful local commercial interests will give it their attention. What interested me most after looking over the Hawaiian Avocado Company's orchards at Waimea and their oil factory and cannery at the corner of Keawe and Hokukania Streets in Kakaako, was the fine work already done in selecting commercial varieties, largely crosses and artificial hybrids, which will give continuous harvests throughout the year.

There are summer pears and winter pears, early and late, of exceptional eating quality. In their breeding work, they have rigidly culled and discarded everything which had less than 16 per cent of oil in the fruits. These 16-per-centers are the "butter pears" of private gardens, hitherto so few and so highly esteemed that they have been seldom obtainable in the markets.

They have also culled out hybrids which were sub-standard in any way, a long drawn out experimentation which eats up the years and costs money. It is preliminary work which had to be done. Their three best summer pears, all with more than 16 per cent oil, are the Panchoy, Huluamanu and Haley-Late, with fruits weighing from 30 to 45 ounces—thick-meated, stringless fruit, rich and nutty in flavor. Among the winter Guatemala-type pears, the Ables are highly satisfactory.

ORIGINATED BY HALEY

But these are only four of the 14 varieties of butter pears with which the 165 acres at Waimea are planted. The late William Haley originated many of these. Other horticulturists have contributed of their skill and knowledge.

I would not call the men who are doing this thing visionaries, but men of vision. It has taken a lot of courage to make this fine start. Lacking the open export market which will surely come, the company has done some work in processing the pears for salads, extracting the oil and putting it to various uses.

They have put out an avocado-flavored mayonnaise which ought to find favor with the American housewife, and are developing a promising outlet for the oil as a base in the manufacture of cosmetics.

The main line, of course, will be the shipment of the superior varieties of fruit, when entry into the mainland markets can be secured for it. The byproduct investigations look to the commercial utilization of the inferior fruit.