

Standardization of Avocado Nursery Trees

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Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen:

In 1939 certain amendments were made to the California state law or Agricultural Code having to do with standardization of nursery stock. While most of the changes affected the grades of ornamental plants, certain changes were also made with respect to fruit trees.

The present law, Section 1149, requires that "Tropical and subtropical fruit trees which are not citrus or olive trees but including among others those which are evergreen * * * * * shall be graded by height, and the grade-sizes shall be stated in the 1-foot series up to six feet, and then in 2-foot series". Nowhere in the law are avocado trees mentioned, but they are included, perhaps unintentionally, in "Evergreen fruit trees not citrus or olive trees".

In Section 35, subsection 1149.8, it is stated that "The violation of any provision of this chapter is a misdemeanor and punishable by a fine of not less than fifty dollars nor more than five hundred dollars or by imprisonment in the county jail for not more than six months or by both fine and imprisonment".

I believe I am correct in stating that at the time this amendment was before the legislature the general membership of the California Avocado Society did not know anything about it, or did not recognize its significance. Certainly there was no discussion of the subject at that time by the Board of Directors of the Society. Of the 16 pages of amendments, almost all of them have to do with ornamental plants and it is probable that the amendments were prepared and advocated by nurserymen predominantly interested in the production and sale of ornamental plants.

Most experienced growers and, I think, most avocado nurserymen recognize that it is to the best interest of the avocado industry that nursery trees be graded and sold on the basis of caliper, as are citrus and olive trees, rather than on the basis of height. If avocado nursery trees are crowded in the row, side branching prevented, and the central stem tied to a tall stake in order to bring a higher price due to height alone; such tall slender trees will require constant staking and tying up for several years. Such trees are more subject to sunburn and wind injury, to say nothing about the cost of staking. A strong, stocky tree with a certain amount of controlled side branching and a top which, at the time of digging, can be cut back strongly to a dormant bud or group of buds will usually grow better and do without much if any staking. It stands handling and transportation much better. It will grow into a lower, more bushy shaped tree from which the fruit can be harvested with a minimum use of ladder and pole pickers.

Last December it was suggested that this Society go before the legislature and

advocate an amendment to the present law, in which avocado nursery trees would specifically be added to citrus and olive trees to be graded and sold by caliper. It was then too late to hope to get action by the present legislature, and it was suggested that the question be brought before this annual meeting for discussion and if such an amendment be favored that the Society Board of Directors be requested to begin now, or in ample time, to get an amendment prepared, introduced, and advocated before the legislature of 1947.

It is possible that there may be some opposition to this proposal, and in order to find out I ask for a general discussion from the floor at this time.*

* After discussion by several nurserymen and growers, Dr. Coit offered a resolution to the effect that the Society Board of Directors prepare and advocate the amendment suggested. The resolution was carried unanimously.