

SHAPING AVOCADO TREES

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There is much controversy regarding the pruning of avocado trees. It is the opinion of the writer that no pruning should be done where the tree is properly shaped and irrigation practices can be carried on without removing low limbs. There is a need, however, to control the growth of tall growing varieties. This type of tree has a tendency to produce fruit largely in the upper branches where harvesting becomes an economic problem. Little work has been done in the study of shaping tall trees. Many growers allow the tree to reach 25 or 30 feet before topping. This not only decreases production the following year, but results in a weak forking of the branches which later may be damaged by wind. Also cutting the tree back to 15 or 20 feet from the ground does not reduce future picking costs.

By nipping the tops of growing trees 4 to 5 feet high a spreading effect can be gained. Continued nipping or cutting branches before they reach the diameter of 1 inch as they grow will give a continued bushing effect without the loss of production. The process of nipping may be necessary several times during the year while the trees are young. As the trees mature the best time to cut back will be in mid-summer. This will insure bloom growth by the following year. I would suggest this practice be followed by cutting back 2 to 4 feet of growth when the tree reaches the desired height.

Many growers in Florida are cutting their trees back to the same height each year. Production has increased and harvest costs have been reduced.

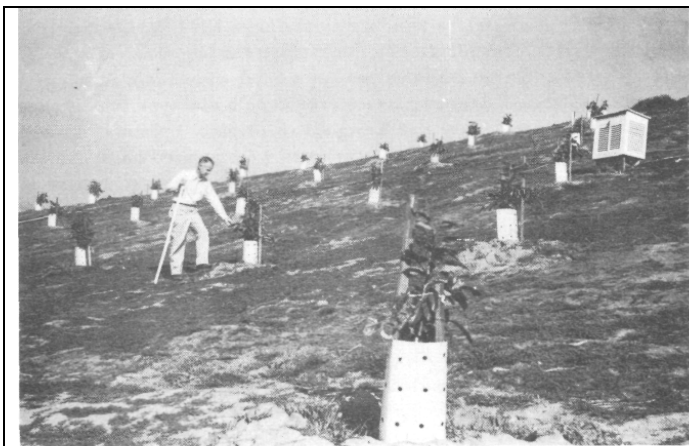


Fig. 1. Hass avocado trees at the Citrus Experiment Station, planted June, 1952, and photographed February, 1954.



Fig. 2. The same trees as in Fig. 1 showing growth obtained by June, 1955, when the trees were three years old.



6-YEAR OLD ZUTANOS