

NEW AVOCADO VARIETIES

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How often the question is asked, "What is the best new variety to plant in my location?" And, the answer has to be, "There is none that has been proven to have the qualifications of a good variety."

Without going into the details that make up a "good variety" it can be defined as one that produces, in most of the avocado growing areas, good crops of fruit that meet good consumer demand. In general, a good avocado should be a Fuerte-like fruit with the bearing habit of the Hass and the climatic adaptability of the Bacon.

Thirty years ago the major avocado plantings were in the coastal areas of San Diego County. Here many of the growers had a seedling which they considered to be outstanding, and many a nurseryman propagated these new varieties and distributed them throughout the avocado growing districts as fine commercial varieties. Today there are few of these "promising" varieties remaining, and none of them are being propagated for commercial plantings.

To name some of the better of the past "promising" varieties, there are; the Millie C, a black fruit with flesh of excellent quality and a tree which bore heavy crops. But the rind was so thick and hard that the consumer could not tell when the fruit was ready to use; the Leucadia, another black, thin-skinned fruit of very good quality and with good consumer acceptance. Few of the Leucadia trees ever produced enough fruit to pay expenses; the Edranol, a very high quality green fruit of excellent consumer acceptance, proved to be a poor bearer in all locations; the Henry's Select, another black thin skinned Fruit of very good quality. After rather extensive promotion proved to be a poor bearer; and the Jalna, a green thin-skinned fruit, usually of good quality, which is no longer acceptable on the market due to extreme seasonal fruit deterioration.

In practically all cases with the above varieties where commercial plantings have been made, the grower has suffered a loss, although due to season of maturity or years of general light crop for the industry, these varieties have at times been profitable.

Other varieties have been promoted in various areas of the avocado growing districts with only a few being planted in sufficient quantity to receive a market test of wide enough coverage to determine their commercial worth.

Two notable exception" to the introduction of new varieties of local seedlings are; the Hass which after more than seventeen years of experimental plantings has proved to be a good commercial variety; and the Bacon which although still not proven in some districts, appears to be of commercial value for planting in many of the colder locations.

The fact that a grower obtains a plant patent on a seedling avocado is no guarantee of quality or productivity. Time and widespread trials are the only means of determining the worth of a variety.

Now that interest in commercial planting of avocados is spreading to areas of more severe climate, there is considerable interest in new varieties which will bear in the interior valleys and that can be harvested before winter frosts. Here we have the problem of finding an avocado variety that meets consumer acceptance year after year and one that meets the grower's need for good production year after year. To date no variety has been found that meets these requirements.

Growers should profit from past experience and note that it takes about 20 years to prove the worth of a new variety of avocado. The parent tree may be in a favorable location for good yearly production of good quality fruit, but until many trials for quality and productivity are made with grafts on large trees and budlings on nursery stock to prove its worth under varying conditions, the grower would be well advised to use caution before making an extended commercial planting.