

The Variety Committee of the California Avocado Society

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Enthusiasm evidenced by many Southern Californians in growing the avocado during the early part of this century resulted in 1915 in the organization of the California Avocado Association, more recently changed to the California Avocado Society. The purpose of the organization was to promote interest in the growing of this fruit, to provide a clearing house for information regarding its culture, and to be mutually helpful to the members in the development of a commercial avocado industry.

Testing of Varieties

The first and only standing committee which has persisted throughout the history of the society is the Variety Committee. The Year Books of the society from the beginning have contained its annual reports and recommendations which have had an important influence on the development of the industry and have been of the greatest assistance to newcomers.

The Variety Committee has continued through the years the most active of all committees. Its chief functions have been to foster the search for new varieties and to study them, both the original and progeny trees, giving consideration to ease of propagation, yield and the marketability of the fruit, as well as other characteristics. As part of the program the search for new varieties has been stimulated through the registration of promising seedlings. The seedlings are given special attention and an effort is

made to obtain cooperators who will grow the most promising ones in their communities. By means of this procedure the performance of many new varieties has been determined for the several avocado growing districts of southern California.

It is recognized that the distribution and sale of the fruit will be more efficiently conducted if a minimum number of varieties are grown. Of the total volume of fruit delivered to Calavo Growers of California, a cooperative marketing organization, by their grower members during 1945, 66% was of the Fuerte variety; 93.6% was composed of 10 varieties including Fuerte, and the balance of 6.4% was made up of 83 varieties and seedlings. Working in the interests of the avocado industry, the committee is now making an effort to markedly reduce the number of varieties propagated for commercial planting.

Climatic Adaptation

Avocado varieties differ widely in their range of climatic adaptation. Those of pure Guatemalan race such as Anaheim, Nabal, Queen, Millie C, and others produce more satisfactorily in coastal climates. Varieties of the Mexican race as a rule do better when grown at some distance from the coast. The so called hybrid varieties, such as Fuerte, are found doing well in nearly all areas.

Desirable Characteristics

In the early years of the industry the important considerations in selecting an ideal variety were oil content, flavor, freedom from fiber and general good ap-

pearance when soft. The present standards for a commercial variety give first consideration to profitable production. Other factors of paramount importance are early bearing, long maturity season, good marketability, a well-shaped fruit—an average size of from 6 to 12 ounces—good general appearance, freedom of change of color of flesh or skin, ease in peeling, ease in determining proper condition of softness, and green color at maturity. From the nursery standpoint ease of propagation is quite important.

Recommended Varieties

The varieties now recommended for commercial planting in southern California are *Fuerte*, *Hass*, *Nabal*, *MacArthur*, and *Anaheim*. It has been found advisable to divide the southern part of the state into 8 climatic districts. None of the five above-mentioned varieties is recommended for all areas.

Fuerte, a so-called Mexican-Guatemalan hybrid is the most important variety and comprises about 75% of the total acreage and is recommended in all areas except the coastal districts of San Diego and Ventura Counties. *Anaheim* and the *Nabal*, both of the Guatemalan race and both grown commercially in many districts of southern California, are recommended only in the coastal district of San Diego County. *Hass*, a comparatively new Guatemalan variety, will probably soon become the second only to *Fuerte*, since it measures up to nearly all of the requirements of an ideal commercial variety, and can probably be grown successfully in any area where the trees can



Hass Avocado, recommended for the coastal district of San Diego County and in Orange and Los Angeles Counties.

be protected from frost during the winter period. *Hass* is recommended commercially, however, only in the coastal district of San Diego County and in Orange and Los Angeles Counties. *MacArthur*, another Guatemalan variety, has proved to be satisfactory for the coastal areas of both Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties.

The avocado industry is constantly looking for new and better varieties. However, the society will no doubt continue to follow the policy of making recommendations for commercial plantings only after a variety has had a thorough trial in the area in which it is to be considered.