



“Do-It-Yourself” Helpful Tips *For the Backyard Grower*

Planting is usually best in an area where there is good drainage. Make sure the sun has full exposure and is not competing with other trees. Spring time is the best time to plant. Seedlings don't work well as most of them will not bear fruit. Buy a grafted variety, like a Hass, from a reputable nursery.

Watering is very important to an avocado tree since it is a subtropical fruit. A full-grown tree needs at least 150 gallons per week in fall, summer and spring. In hot weather, water twice a week for short times as avocados roots are near the surface. If tip burn occurs it is probably salt build up. Increase watering up to 250 gallons per week. To check the output of a sprinkler, turn it on and place it in a five gallon bucket, then time how long it takes to fill up. This will tell how many hours a tree needs to be watered. Younger trees need more frequent watering for short periods due to the roots being close to the surface.

Scott's Turf Supreme is a good all around nutrient that has trace minerals that are essential to keeping an avocado with green leaves to say the least. Younger trees require more frequent but lighter fertilizing. A mature tree which is anything over four years old takes half a pound of nitrogen per year. Apply a quarter cup of fertilizer around where the sprinkler wets the soil every other week. Back off during heavy flowering as the tree does not need to grow.

Pruning starts just before the days start getting longer, like in February or sooner, but after any threat of frost. Eliminate branches that go in a downward direction or ones that touch or are near the ground. If they touch the ground ants can infest the tree. Long green-stemmed sucker shoots that go up straight up should be topped. As the tree grows, keep the center of the tree open. Ultimately the avocado tree will be vase shaped.

Picking time can be a long span lasting several months. Growers should start picking when the oil content is above a designated percentage. The oil content will rise as long as the fruit is on the tree until the stem right next to the fruit turns woody or brown in color. Also the fruit will be dark in color. This is the optimum time to pick for quality. Sometimes the fruit drops to the ground. Grab it before your dog gets it. He knows the best tasting avocado is one that has just fallen from a tree.

For Further Help – Contact a Master Gardener in Your Area. Hotlines are staffed by experienced gardeners, under the supervision and training of Farm advisors. If you reach an answer machine, please leave your name, number and brief description of what you are experiencing, and someone will return your call.

MASTER GARDENER HOTLINES:

- **LOS ANGELES:** 323-260-3238
- **ORANGE COUNTY:** 714-708-1646
- **SAN DIEGO:** 858-694-2860
- **SAN LUIS OBISPO:** 805-781-5939
- **SANTA CLARA:** 408-299-2636
- **VENTURA:** 805-645-1455

