**Persea americana**
Avocado¹

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson²

**INTRODUCTION**

The large, lustrous dark green evergreen leaves and low-branching, open canopy of Avocado makes it a wonderful shade tree but it is most often grown for the abundant production of its well-known, delicious, buttery fruits (Fig. 1). Depending on cultivars and variety, the fruits may vary from smooth-skinned to rough, and yellow-green to purple. Commonly seen at 35 to 40 feet in height but capable of growing much larger, Avocado fits well into large residential landscapes in frost-protected locations. It can be pruned to an open spreading form or left to grow tall forming a rather narrow oval. Older trees become more rounded. The somewhat showy, greenish flowers appear on terminal panicles in late winter to early spring and are followed by the large, pendulous, pear-shaped fruits, ripening late summer to early spring, depending upon variety.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Scientific name:** Persea americana  
**Pronunciation:** PER-see-uh uh-mair-ih-KAY-nuh  
**Common name(s):** Avocado  
**Family:** Lauraceae  
**USDA hardiness zones:** 9B through 11 (Fig. 2)  
**Origin:** not native to North America  
**Uses:** fruit tree; shade tree; specimen; no proven urban tolerance  
**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

**DESCRIPTION**

**Height:** 30 to 40 feet  
**Spread:** 25 to 35 feet

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Crown uniformity: symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms
Crown shape: oval; round
Crown density: moderate
Growth rate: fast
Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: elliptic (oval)
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: broadleaf evergreen; evergreen
Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: green
Flower characteristics: inconspicuous and not showy; spring flowering; winter flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval (Fig. 3)
Fruit length: 3 to 6 inches
Fruit covering: fleshy
Fruit color: green; purple
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; suited for human consumption; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter; persistent on the tree; showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; not particularly showy; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns
Pruning requirement: requires pruning to develop strong structure
Breakage: susceptible to breakage either at the crotch due to poor collar formation, or the wood itself is
weak and tends to break

**Current year twig color:** green
**Current year twig thickness:** medium

**Culture**

**Light requirement:** tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun
**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; acidic; alkaline; well-drained
**Drought tolerance:** moderate
**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate
**Soil salt tolerance:** poor

**Other**

**Roots:** surface roots are usually not a problem
**Winter interest:** no special winter interest
**Outstanding tree:** not particularly outstanding
**Invasive potential:** little, if any, potential at this time
**Ozone sensitivity:** tolerant
**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** susceptible
**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

**USE AND MANAGEMENT**

Avocado trees grow quickly in either full sun or light shade on any well-drained soil. Trees should be watered regularly until established and later during droughts. A forest tree in its native habitat, Avocado respond well to a thick leaf mulch and periodic fertilization. Lawn grasses should be kept away from the trunk. The brittle wood of Avocado trees is subject to storm damage when trees grow taller than 50 feet in the open.


Propagation is by seed or grafting.

**Pests**

Mites and scale infestations can become quite serious in local areas.

**Diseases**

Root rots on poorly-drained soils and leaf-spotting diseases can be troublesome.