

Persea americana Avocado¹

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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

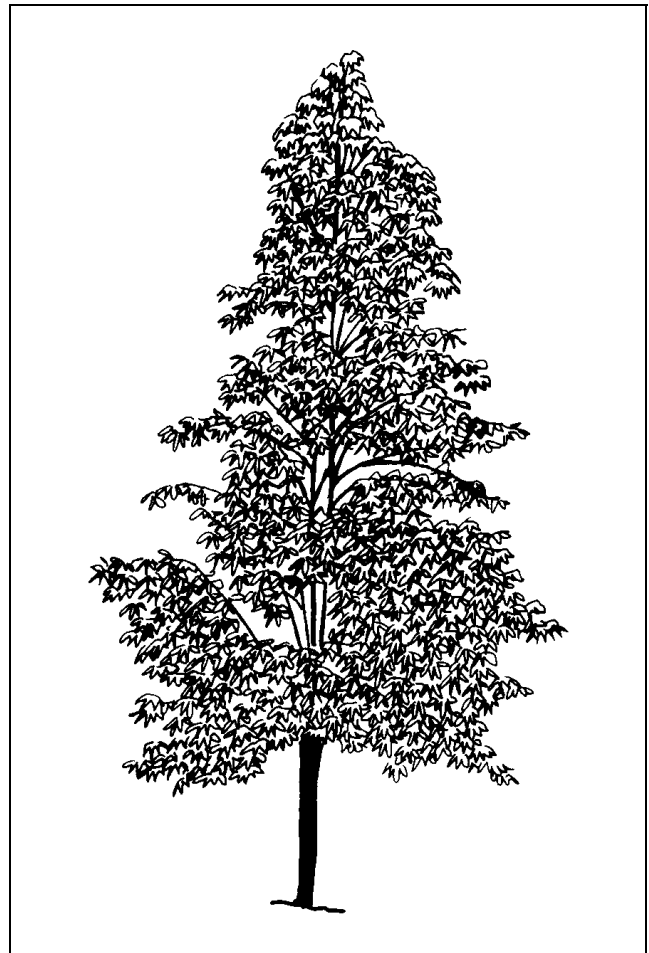


Figure 1. Middle-aged Avocado.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 30 to 40 feet

Spread: 25 to 35 feet

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

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

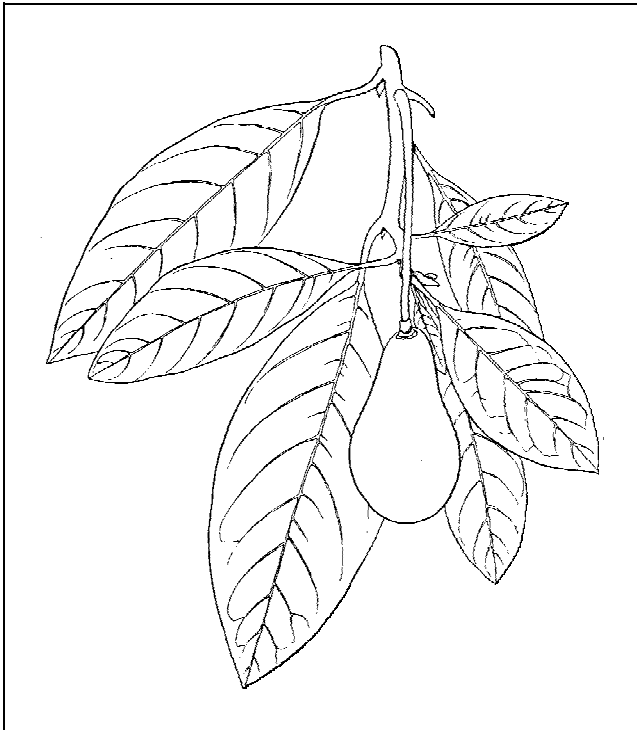


Figure 3. Fruit of Avocado.

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.

Some of the many cultivars available for variety of fruit production and season are: 'Lula', 'Tonnage', 'Taylor', 'Booth 7', 'Booth 8', 'Pollack', 'Trapp', 'Walden', 'Linda', and 'Itzamna'.

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.