**Persea americana: Avocado**

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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. 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
- **Invasive potential:** little invasive potential
- **Uses:** shade; fruit; specimen
- **Availability:** not native to North America

Figure 1. Middle-aged *Persea americana*: Avocado

Figure 2. Range
Persea americana: Avocado

Description
Height: 30 to 40 feet
Spread: 25 to 35 feet
Crown uniformity: symmetrical
Crown shape: oval, round
Crown density: moderate
Growth rate: fast
Texture: coarse

Foliage
Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: elliptic (oval)
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen, broadleaf evergreen
Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower
Flower color: green
Flower characteristics: not showy

Fruit
Fruit shape: oval
Fruit length: 3 to 6 inches
Fruit covering: fleshy
Fruit color: green, purple
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; showy; fruit/leaves a litter problem

Trunk and Branches
Trunk/bark/branches: branches droop; not showy; typically one trunk; thorns
Pruning requirement: needed for strong structure
Breakage: susceptible to breakage
Current year twig color: green
Current year twig thickness: medium
Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture
Light requirement: full sun, partial sun or partial shade
Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; alkaline; acidic; well-drained
Drought tolerance: moderate
Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Other
Roots: not a problem
Winter interest: no
Outstanding tree: no
Ozone sensitivity: tolerant
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible
Pest resistance: resistant to pests/diseases

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.