

# Avocado For Home Growing

Great interest has been aroused in the home growing of Avocados. They are well suited to both the metropolitan sandy soils and our climate. Avocados are one of the most nutrient dense foods available, they are rich in vitamins but contain no cholesterol. It's the buttery texture of the fruit plus the colour that make Avocados one of the most sought after culinary fruits. From appetisers to drinks, cold soups to salads and sandwiches to dessert - has there ever been a more versatile fruit? One of our favourite salad recipes is included at the end of this caresheet.

## GROWING NEEDS

Avocados are mainly tall spreading trees, they need plenty of room to grow. Choose a sunny site. It's important to protect young trees from both frost and strong winds.

A small shelter of shade-cloth in the form of a vertical curtain around the tree works well. Mature trees also need protection from strong winds so it is worth planting a more permanent windbreak.

Highly susceptible to the Jarrah Dieback disease, Avocados relish sandy soils where good drainage offers protection from this root rotting fungus.

Avocados will respond well to a rich soil. In sandy areas incorporate sufficient quantities of Waldecks Multi Mix, Waldecks Peat or Waldecks Bio-ganic to make up half of the mix.

Mulching with similar organic materials will benefit the tree by keeping down weed competition and holding moisture near the root zone. Avocados respond well to feeding in spring, summer and autumn with Waldecks All Purpose Plant Food.

## FRUIT PRODUCTION

Avocados have a curious flowering habit. Each flower functions as a female when it opens one day and then open as a male on the following day. In order to overlap these times and achieve pollination it is necessary to plant two trees.

Look for A and B varieties in your garden centre - you need to plant one of each. One variety Feurte is a reliable self cropper in the Perth Metropolitan Area.

Most trees will take 3 years from planting to produce reasonable crops. However, both of the Dwarf varieties Rincon and Wurtz will produce earlier fruits.

## PICKING & RIPENING AVOCADOS

Fruits will not ripen on the tree. When ready for harvesting the fruit stem starts to yellow. Break this stem leaving a stub about 2-3 cms long. Leave avocados in a fruit bowl in the kitchen until they soften - usually 4-10 days. You can speed up softening by wrapping in aluminium foil or newspaper or placing in a paper bag. Once fully soft avocados are ready to eat, however, you can store them in this softened form in the crisper of the fridge for weeks. To prevent darkening brush the cut surface of Avocados with lemon juice. Store any unused fruit in air tight plastic wrap in the fridge.

## A PLACE IN THE GARDEN

Avocado trees give a lovely dappled shade and make a perfect environment for growing pot plants under. The Dwarf

varieties, Wurtz and Rincon, can be grown in large tubs around the patio. They are always attractive plants with glossy deep green foliage. New leaves come through a claret colour making a lovely contrast. Instead of growing a box tree for shade, plant an Avocado for shade and fruit.

Now for that promised recipe, this one is called "Pecan Avocado Ensalada". The lovely variations in the texture make this an elegant summer salad for entertaining.

Ingredients:

1 Lettuce

4 Avocados cut into rings

4 Hard boiled eggs, sliced

1 Cup of chopped Pecans

Californian Dressing

Tear lettuce into a salad bowl, sprinkle with Pecans, arrange Avocado rings and egg slices on lettuce, pour on dressing. 6-8 servings.

Californian Dressing - (makes about 1 1/2 cups). Blend and chill 1/3 cup of salad oil, 2/3 cup of lemon juice, 1/4 cup of vinegar, 2 teaspoons each of salt and paprika, 1 1/2 teaspoons of dry mustard, 1/2 teaspoon each of onion, salt and pepper.