

## Avocado Tree

Common Name: Avocado

Botanical Name: Persea Americana

Family: Sapotaceae

Avg Height X width: 25ft. X 20ft.

Damage temp: 25 – 26F

Once established, the avocado tree is fairly tough. However, many avocado trees fail during the first 12 months due to poor soil drainage, sunburn or improper irrigation habits. Prior to planting, keep the tree in a pot until “bark” appears on trunk of the tree. This usually takes one to 2 years to appear. In the wild, avocado trees grow as an under-story tree and need to be protected from sun scalding while young. The tree needs to be protected from sun and freeze for the first couple of years or until the tree is over 8ft and has sufficient foliage to protect itself. tall. The tree grows to 25ft X 20ft. and of course can be pruned to be smaller. The tree likes well drained soil.

### **Types of Trees Suitable for Brazoria County:**

Joey – Joey is a medium sized Mexican avocado weighing approximately 6-10 ounces with a thin purplish-black skin and egg shaped. It is also known to be a heavy bearer. Cold Hardy Avocado mature trees have withstood temperatures as low as 15-18 degrees. The fruit ripens from August to October. The Joey was originally found in Uvalde, TX. by Joey Ricers The Joey avocado tree may be erect, usually to 30 ft.

Lila - "Lila" avocado trees bear a medium-sized, pear-shaped fruit in the early spring season. The fruits of this cold hardy tree – which reaches heights of 10 to 15 feet with proper care – have a rich, pleasant taste and a high oil content, ripening July - September. Avocado trees thrive in U.S. Department of Agriculture hardiness zones 9 through 11, where they often serve as shade trees.

Mexicola Grande - The Mexicola Grande has a glossy, near black, thin easy to peel skin. The flesh is creamy and almost delicate in texture and has a flavor that is rich, nutty and smooth. Mexicola Grande avocados are petit in size and weigh an average of four ounces to eight ounces. The fruit ripens from August to October. The tree is fast growing and very cold tolerant to 18 or 20 degrees and grows to a height of 25 to 30 feet and 15 to 20 feet wide. The Mexicola Grande is self-pollinating and is considered a Type "A" pollinator.

Pancho/Poncho - Cold Hardy Avocado mature trees have withstood temperatures down to 15-18 degrees. Poncho has been in Florida for at least 25 years that we know of its great taste was always overlooked because of its small size, 6–8 ounces, the flesh has a creamy texture and an excellent flavor. Poncho fruits in July and August and by the first week of September it is usually finished producing. When ripe, the fruit is lime green in color with a red blush on its mid-section. Even though it is small the flavor of the Poncho avocado is amazing.

### **Take Tree Home Today:**

- 1) Repot to larger container.
- 2) The tree will need to stay in this container for 1-2 years or until the tree has bark and is about 8ft tall.
- 3) Fertilize the tree while it is in the container. (See "Fertilize" section of this document.
- 4) Keep tree outside, in a spot with morning sun exposure.
- 5) Protect the tree from afternoon sun and freezing temps.
- 6) Tree needs 6-8 hours of morning sun.

### **Planting Your Tree:**

It is important that the site and care of the tree are followed to assure the tree is healthy and productive. The following are steps that will be helpful.

### **Site Selection:**

- 1) Plant the tree or place the pot in an area that provides protection from the hot afternoon sun until 8ft tall.
- 2) Tree needs 6-8 hours of morning sun.
- 3) Plant the tree on the south/southeast side of house or building at least 8-10ft from the building to protect from cold North temperatures.

### **Soil Preparation:**

- 1) Dig down 6-8 inches in a 10 ft. circle and remove the soil
- 2) Fill area with sand and till.
- 3) Add 4-6" of compost then till.
- 4) Mound the soil to create a raised bed.
- 5) Top of mound will be 12" above ground level.

### **Planting the Tree:**

- 1) Plant the tree in March.
- 2) Remove tree from the pot. Being careful with the roots they are tender.
- 3) Look for the white roots; gently loosen the soil around these roots, gently.
- 4) Dig the hole twice the diameter of the root ball. The prepared soil will be the root zone and only 2 to 3 inches of the root ball should be below the original grade. Do not build the raised mound over 12" above ground level or the tree can be blown over until the roots are established. The root zone is very shallow, only 3ft deep and grows outward more than down. Stake the tree until the roots get going.
- 5) Mix 8 tablespoons of root stimulator (Carl Pool's Root Stimulator) and 1 tablespoon of Miracle Gro or equivalent water soluble fertilizer in 1 gallon of water.
- 6) Use this mixture to fertilize the tree once a month for the first year, from Feb 15<sup>th</sup> through September. This will give your tree a very strong start.
- 7) After covering root ball with soil, cover the soil with 4" of hardwood mulch.
- 8) Remove "suckers" from below the graft. Keep them trimmed.

### **Fertilizing:**

- 1) Add a small amount of high N<sub>2</sub> fertilizer, about ½ cup, once a month, to compensate for the hardwood mulch.
- 2) This fertilizer should be added once a month for the first year, from Feb. 15<sup>th</sup> through September.
- 3) After September through Feb. 15<sup>th</sup> add fertilizer without N<sub>2</sub>.
- 4) Use Phosphorus and Pot Ash with other micro nutrients lightly until Feb 15<sup>th</sup>.
- 5) Use balanced fertilizer 13-13-13 plus micro nutrients or Citrus fertilizer Feb 15<sup>th</sup> through September from the second year on (Valentine's Day, Mother's Day and Father's Day)

### **Protection from Freeze:**

- 1) Fertilize and water regularly. A healthy tree is will survive harsh conditions better than a sick tree.
- 2) Add 1" of hardwood mulch annually under canopy of tree out to 1ft outside of drip line, before the first freeze to protect the roots.

### **Protection from Extreme Cold Weather:**

- 1) Protect tree by covering with freeze cloth until over 10ft tall and place a 100 watt light bulb inside the covering.
- 2) After 10ft tall protect truck of tree to the height of 3 ½ ft., using freeze cloth and 100 watt light bulb.
- 3) Mulch roots to protect the roots.

### **Harvesting the Fruit:**

- 1) Tree will start producing fruit in 2 – 4 years.
- 2) Pick fruit with stem attached.
- 3) Removing the stem will cause fruit to ripen too quickly starting at the stem.
- 4) Use avocado "pole picker" to cut the stem and catch the fruit in a bag.
- 5) Consider topping your tree to manage the height of the tree. You cannot pick fruit that is 40ft high.

### **Need to Know:**

- 1) Avocados will not ripen on the tree.
- 2) You need to know what color the fruit is and when (month) the fruit is ready to be harvested.
- 3) After the tree is 10ft tall fertilize Valentine's Day, Mother's Day and Father's Day with 13-13-13 or Citrus Tree fertilizer. This is the same schedule used to fertilize Citrus Trees.
- 4) The tree must be planted in a well-drained area, standing much water will kill this tree.
- 5) Trees need 6-8 hours of morning sun.
- 6) Do not mound raised beds over 12" tall, tree roots are only 3 ft. deep.
- 7) Stake your tree to prevent it from blowing over if not protected from wind, by a building or fence.
- 8) Do NOT use avocado wood as BBQ wood. It is poisonous.
- 9) Once established this tree is fairly tough and beautiful. Enjoy!
- 10) Around Christmas, add a "dusting" of gypsum, dusting around the root zone. Make it look like a light powdering of snow. This will allow any accumulated salt to move through the ground.
- 11) The green slick bark of the tree is the part of the tree that the hot afternoon sun damages. Shade structures can prevent scalding. A 50/50 mixture of white latex paint and water can be painted on tender limbs to prevent the scalding also.

### **Helpful Web Sites:**

<http://txmg.org/brazoria/>

<http://www.plantogram.com/index.php>

<http://www.buyplantsonline.com/mexicola-grande-avocado-tree.html>

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/fruit-nut/>