

Avocado Cultivation

Avocados are evergreen trees. In Perth they usually grow to 3-4m high, although they are capable of reaching heights of up to 7m.

Soils and Position: Avocados prefer a sunny position sheltered from hot drying winds. They prefer soils with high organic matter content, so when planting incorporate ample organic matter such Dawson's Organic Soil Improver.

Establishing the Young Tree: Young trees will require staking and some shading provided by shade cloth wrapped some stakes. This will be required for the first summer or two. Provide ample water at all times.

Pruning: Avocados require little or no pruning. In the early stages the main leader may be tipped back if it becomes too long.

Fertilising: Avocados enjoy soils with a high organic matter status, so it's a good idea to mulch around trees with straw and sheep manure or cow manure annually. It is thought that maintaining good organic matter levels, reduces the incidence of root rot (caused by the fungus Phytophthora). Avocados have a shallow feeding root system, so avoid surface cultivation around them. They are best fertilised by scattering a few handfuls of All Purpose fertiliser underneath the tree's drip-zone once in autumn and 2-3 times during the period between November to March.

Fruiting and Varieties: Seed raised trees will begin to bear fruit at 5-7 years old and grafted trees from 3-5 years after planting. In Perth Avocados flower in spring, the fruit forms in November and fruit can be harvested from June until November.

There are two varieties commonly sold by Dawsons, these are Fuerte and Hass. Both Hass and Fuerte are sufficiently self fertile to produce crops without the cross pollination of another variety. Hass and Fuerte, will also cross pollinate each other, so crops can be increased by planting two trees (ie. one of each variety). Hass has smaller, thick-skinned fruit, while Fuerte has thinner-skinned fruit.

Pests and Diseases: Avocados are susceptible to root rots including Phytophthora. Providing ample organic mulches will encourage natural soil fungi antagonistic to Phytophthora. Trees can also be sprayed with Yates Anti Rot as a preventative measure. Scales, aphids and thrips can also be pests. Iron deficiency can be a problem in Perth's limey soils and can be corrected by applying Iron Chelates. It's not unusual for avocados grown in Perth to have scorched leaves. While it is unsightly, established trees seem relatively untroubled by it. Eco-naturalure is an excellent organic spray, suitable for fruit fly control.



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