

# From the Grove

Summer 2025

The Latest News from the California Avocado Industry

**27 ATTENDEES, 9 STORIES  
(AND COUNTING):  
Grove Tour Delivers for CA Avocados  
See more on Page 12**



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## Featured California Avocado Recipes from the 2025 Marketing Campaign Story on Page 28



### From the **Grove**

Volume 15, Number 2

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By Jason Cole  
Chairman of the Board



Jason Cole

## Our New President

It is my honor to introduce Ken Melban as the new California Avocado Commission president, effective May 22, 2025. Having said that, I'm not really *introducing* Ken to our readers — simply his change in title — because he has been a fierce, respected advocate for California avocado growers since 2011 when he joined CAC as the director, issues management.

For the past 14 years, Ken has served as the face and voice of California avocado growers on some of the thorniest issues — water rates and supply, the Farm Bill, sensible immigration measures to ensure we have a stable workforce, pesticide registrations, wildfire compensation, exports, USDA inspections of imported fruit — before some of the most challenging audiences of industry members, regulators and legislators. He has always protected our best interests — diligently pressing forward no matter how distant success might have seemed. One example of that is the nine years he spent advocating to secure market access to China, which was finally granted in 2020. Or his current efforts to convince the U.S. Department of Agriculture to reinstate its original inspection protocols of Mexican avocados by the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

His perseverance on behalf of growers led to his rapid rise at the



Ken Melban, President, California Avocado Commission.

Commission — in just four years he was deservedly promoted to vice president, industry affairs and then tacked “operations” on to that title in 2022—leading successful efforts to right size CAC staffing, internalize more functions, and optimize the budget and assessment rates. In the last two years, he’s served as co-executive leader alongside Terry Splane, CAC’s vice president of marketing — the two of them effectively pairing the public facing marketing side of our business with the nuts and bolts of operations and industry affairs.

The Commission’s efforts during the last few years to streamline the organization and its processes has served us well and we have settled into a good

place. With new challenges on the horizon, we are ready to move forward, and it makes perfect sense to put the guy who has served as our most vocal and effective advocate for more than a decade at the head of the organization.

Ken has the full support of the Board and our industry. His face and unmistakable voice have long represented California avocado growers’ interests before the rest of the world. His finesse, persistence and knowledge will help us lean into the future with a strong sense of continuity and purpose. On behalf of all our California avocado growers, I congratulate Ken and thank him for his service. 🥑





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## Fine-tuning the Commission's Work



*Ken Melban*

**A**s of mid-July, the 2025 California avocado season is in full swing, with 250 million pounds harvested at an average price of \$1.65 per pound through May. That's nearly 75% of the California Avocado Commission's 340-million-pound crop projection, down about 9.5% from the original 375-million-pound pre-season estimate.

Both the pre-season estimate and annual crop survey are based on grower and packer surveys distributed twice a year. In recent years, grower participation has yielded response rates representing nearly 40% of total acreage, pretty impressive. A little research confirmed a 30–50% response rate is considered “good,” while anything above 50% is deemed “excellent.”

If you're among those who regularly participate in the Commission's surveys, thank you. Accurate forecasting of volume and timing information is helpful in guiding decision making for growers, packers and the Commission. So, if you haven't yet experienced the joy of completing a crop survey, we encourage you to give it a try next time. Your input is important.

In recent years, the Commission's Board and executive leadership have been conducting an organizational tune-up, evaluating every marketing and non-marketing activity to

determine return on investment and optimize use of resources. As part of this effort, the Commission restructured staff roles and responsibilities. The current staff size is eight, down from 12 in 2020, a 33% reduction.

We have fine-tuned our marketing program with greater focus on resource allocation across consumer marketing, retail trade and foodservice trade. Recently I joined the marketing staff and agencies for the 2025–26 marketing strategic planning meeting, which was a great opportunity to observe the process. Terry Splane, vice president of marketing, did a great job leading the discussion. It's clear the team has many creative ideas.

While marketing aims to increase grower returns through higher prices, the Commission's advocacy efforts often focus on reducing or preventing added costs for growers. For example, since 2024, the Commission has been calling for the U.S. Department of Agriculture to reinstate USDA-employed inspectors in Mexican avocado groves for the specific purpose of preventing the introduction of seed and/or stem weevils into California. If the pest invasion were to occur, treatments would be costly, if available, and possibly unaffordable. The harm could be irreversible.

In June, I held meetings in Washington D.C. with senior USDA officials.

The conversations were candid, and I can report with confidence that USDA has heard our concerns and recognizes our unwavering commitment to this issue. I also met with Congressional Members Darrell Issa, GT Thompson (Chair, House Committee on Agriculture), John Boozman (Chair, Senate Committee on Agriculture) and others.

Recently, I was invited to speak at the monthly meeting of the San Diego Council of Water Utilities, consisting of general managers and board members from local water agencies. The timing was significant, as the San Diego County Water Authority is considering discontinuing the Permanent Special Agricultural Water Rate (PSAWR). I emphasized the non-market benefits of avocado production such as carbon sequestration, greenspace preservation and wildfire mitigation, and stressed the importance of maintaining the PSAWR. The San Diego County Farm Bureau has taken the lead on this issue and done an excellent job rallying support.

As always, if you have questions or see a way the Commission can assist growers, please let me know ([kmelban@avocado.org](mailto:kmelban@avocado.org)). 🍌



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**Scan to email our Northern California team**

By *Terry Splane*  
Vice President of Marketing



*Terry Splane*

## Talking about Sustainability



**A**lthough sustainability has many definitions — from environmentally friendly to ethically sourced and responsibly grown to economically viable — across the globe, sustainability has become part of everyday conversations. California avocado growers have long complied with the laws and regulations of the U.S. government and California and compared to some imports this compliance already creates some sustainability advantages.

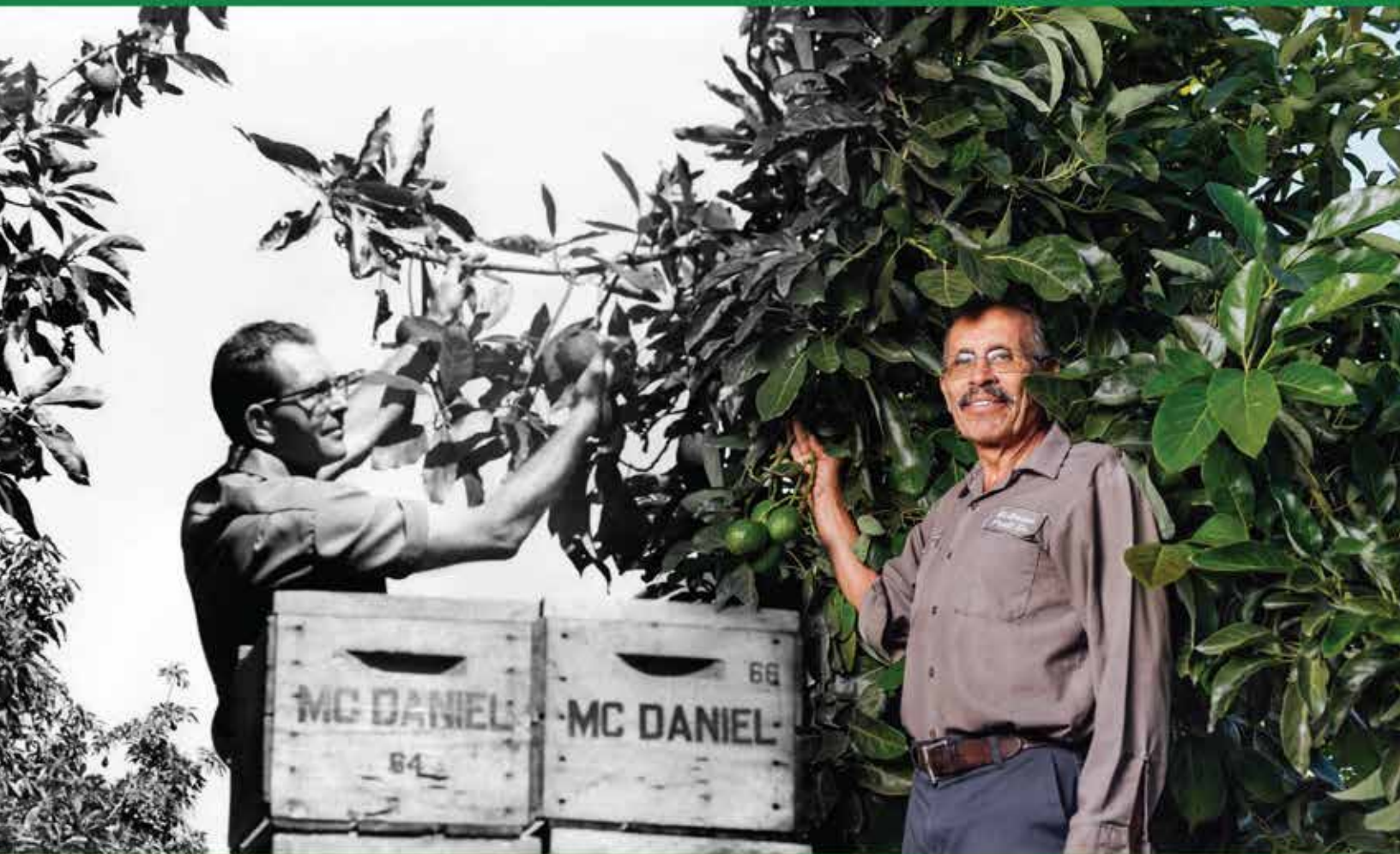
Several years ago, CAC began subtly integrating messaging about sustainability into consumer and trade communications. Today, it has evolved to a more prominent role in our advertising — lending authenticity and credibility to California avocado messaging. Many of CAC's sustainability communications are deliberately broad, using key messages such as “locally grown and sustainably farmed,” “responsibly grown” and “ethically sourced”. These

messages have been approved by the USDA and have value in the competitive avocado industry as media, consumer advocacy groups, consumers, activists, industry representatives and global competitors have turned their sights on the topic.

This season sustainability has come to the fore across the globe. The Hass Avocado Board's vision is for its Avocado Sustainability Center to become the premier provider of sustainability research, data and information to help secure a better future for the Hass avocado industry. HAB wants to establish itself as a trusted thought-leader in sustainability with work focused around three tenants: healthy foods, healthy people and a healthy planet. Research funds are targeted around capturing carbon, building soil health, water use and efficiency, higher density planting, supporting strong communities and renewable energy.

Possibly spurred on by significant negative press surrounding environmental and ethical concerns about the production of Avocados from Mexico, the Avocado Institute of Mexico, which encompasses the Association of Avocado Exporting Producers and Packers of Mexico and the Mexican Hass Avocado Importers Association, recently announced a sustainability initiative





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focused on four very specific priorities:

1. A water resource management program by 2026
2. A plan regarding conserving biodiversity and ecological connectivity, protecting and restoring local ecosystems, reducing the impact on the environment
3. Enhancing carbon sequestration with a goal of a net-zero carbon footprint through the avocado supply chain by 2035
4. Reducing deforestation/achieving net zero deforestation landscape by 2035

The Colombian Hass avocado industry has established sustainability benchmarks for environmental, social and economic impacts. Further, they claim their nation has an edge because their avocados “do not rely on man-made irrigation” given their “35,000 acres currently planted are naturally irrigated with plentiful rainfall.”

The Commission is lending its voice to the sustainability conversation via several avenues. CAC President Ken Melban and California avocado growers Jamie Johnson and Daryn Miller serve as panel advisors for the HAB sustainability initiative. Further, CAC’s marketing has broadened sustainability communication with USDA-approved key messaging that showcases “locally grown and sustainably farmed,” “responsibly grown” and “ethically sourced” California avocados. Across our trade and consumer communications, we feature sustainability messaging when it is appropriate — and we do so by specifically focusing on five areas:

- How locally grown avocados make a difference
- Benefits of environmentally friendly farming
- How our industry supports healthy communities
- What makes California avocados ethically sourced

- How our industry strengthens California’s economy

For years, data from CAC tracking studies has demonstrated sustainability messaging resonates with our targeted consumers and increases the perceived value of the locally grown fruit. Further, this messaging is a very good fit with select trade customers’ brand strategies. However, some consumers are pushing for more information and want to understand what we mean by such terms as “responsibly grown.”

As we watch interest in sustainability increase across the globe — and monitor global competitors’ efforts to demonstrate their commitment to sustainable initiatives — competitively, the California avocado industry needs to have a voice and be part of the conversation about it. Sustainability is not new to our industry and while I am sometimes asked by growers if there is a risk in CAC talking about sustainability when there are differences between growers and their level of commitment to these initiatives, my response is this: I believe there is more risk in *not* talking, responsibly, about California avocado sustainability. Especially now, when it is an increasing part of the conversation about avocados.

Being the locally grown choice for most of our customers and consumers and complying with the robust laws and regulations of California can provide the California avocado industry with a significant advantage versus other sources of supply. As consumer, government and grower predilections undulate we need to continue to be nimble and adjust messaging, especially as our distribution grows beyond California. To be prepared our team is researching what resonates regionally. Keeping the conversation open there also may be opportunities, collectively and individually, to learn from other industry sustainability initiatives. 🥑



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Alternate/Tina Wolford

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Alternate/Maddie Cook

To contact a CAC representative, please visit:  
[CaliforniaAvocadoGrowers.com/Commission/your-representatives](https://CaliforniaAvocadoGrowers.com/Commission/your-representatives)



## CALIFORNIA AVOCADO COMMISSION 2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION

The Annual CAC Board Election will be held in October 2025 for one Producer Member Seat and one Producer Alternate Member Seat in each of the five CAC districts. In addition, one Handler Member Seat and one Handler Alternate Member Seat are also open. All seats in the 2025 CAC Election are for two-year terms. The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) will announce the results of the 2025 Annual CAC Board Election and seat new Board Members at the CAC Board meeting on November 13, 2025. 🗳️

### SUMMARY OF OPEN SEATS\*

<u>District</u>	<u>Member</u>	<u>Alternate</u>
1	Robert Jackson	Enrico Ferro
2	Victor Araiza	Tina Wolferd
3	Rob Grether	John Berns
4	Jason Cole	Hayden McIntyre
5	Daryn Miller	Byron Talley
Handler	Peter Shore	Currently Vacant

\* Names shown are incumbents presently holding producer/handler seats

### 2025 ELECTION SCHEDULE

July 14	Election announcement / self-nomination notice sent to all Producers and Handlers
August 25	Deadline for receipt of signed nomination petitions, candidate disclosure statements & affidavits and requests for voter access mailings at CAC
September 5	Deadline for CAC receipt of voter access mailings
September 24	CAC mails ballots to producers and handlers
October 24	Deadline for receipt of ballots by CDFA
November 7	CDFA advises CAC staff of election results
November 13	CDFA announces election results to CAC Board and seats new Board Members and Alternates



*The highly successful event brought together nearly 30 people across industry segments.*

## 27 Attendees, 9 Stories (and Counting): Grove Tour Delivers for California Avocados

**O**n April 23-24, 2025, the California Avocado Commission hosted 27 key media, and foodservice and retail partners for the *THIS is California Avocado Season Grove Tour*. Held at Camlam Farms in Camarillo and hosted by the Lamb family, the tour offered these V.I.P. guests an immersive look at the care, dedication and story behind growing California avocados — through the viewpoint of one of the multigenerational California families who produce them.

CAC designed this curated experience to strengthen relationships with media and secure in-season coverage, as well as deepen retail and foodservice partner loyalty by showing first-hand what makes California avocados distinct: being locally grown, sustainably farmed and ethically sourced by passionate and dedicated growers.

### **Connecting the Right People to the Right Story**

Attendees included food media from outlets such as *Buzzfeed*, *Eater LA*, *LA Times*, *Edible Monterey*, *AllRecipes*, *Yahoo!* and the *Santa Barbara Independent*; trade journalists from *Fresh Fruit Portal*, *Produce Blue Book* and *The Packer*; foodservice operators from Mendocino Farms, Norm's Restaurants and True Food Kitchen; and a digital and social media manager from Albertsons–Vons–Pavilions. These professionals shape how consumers discover and experience California avocados — through stories, social posts, menu items and in-store displays.

The tour kicked off with an avocado-forward dinner at Pearl District in Westlake Village. The next day, the Lamb family welcomed guests to their groves in Camarillo. Attendees rode by wagon through rows of Lamb Hass and Hass avocado trees,





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*Eight teams made unique guacamole creations.*



*Terry Splane, Vice President of Marketing at the California Avocado Commission, led the Lamb family in a Q&A.*



stopping for live demonstrations on irrigation, frost prevention, pollination and harvest. Attendees picked avocados, competed in a guacamole-making contest and sat down for a California-inspired lunch on the grounds. The grove visit concluded with a lengthy Q&A with Robert Lamb, John Lamb and Maureen Lamb Cottingham, and the day ended with a California avocado tasting menu dinner at Crawford's Social in Westlake Village.

### ***Bringing the Brand to Life, On the Ground***

By forging deeper connections with influential media, foodservice decision-makers and retail partners, CAC created more than just a memorable day — it built momentum for the California Avocados brand. Experiences like this help drive home the value of California-grown; build affinity with buyers; and inspire stories and partnerships that ultimately lead to stronger demand and shelf space. By giving partners a personal look at the growers, the groves and the care that goes into every piece of fruit, CAC laid the groundwork for meaningful, long-term collaboration — ensuring that when it comes time to plan a story, launch a menu or set a seasonal display, California avocados remain top of mind.

### ***The immediate results speak for themselves:***

- 30 attendees (goal: 20+)
- 9 media stories to date with more on the way (goal: 5+)
- 63 million potential reach from media coverage to date
- 24 social media posts shared
- 100% positive feedback from attendees



*Attendees were encouraged to stay connected on social media.*



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*THIS is California Avocado Season!*

***Participants' comments, coverage and social content captured the emotion and energy of the experience:***

"Getting to do something like this is the fun part of our job — it's been really special." – Media attendee

"I've already captured so much content and we're not even halfway through the day." – Media attendee

"Camlam, a big name in the industry and the reason behind the city's name, is more than just a piece of land for the Lamb family." – Fresh Fruit Portal story

"It's more than just fruit. It's family, passion and purpose. Thank you to the Lamb family and @ca\_avocados for showing us the heart behind the harvest."

– True Food Kitchen social posts 🥑



*Attendees had opportunities to capture content at every turn.*



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## Pruning Avocado Trees: Science, Art or Mysticism?

**V**entura County Avocado Farm Advisor Ben Faber recently spoke about pruning avocado trees at a Pine Tree Ranch field day. To say pruning is a hot topic is an understatement. Just about everyone has a different opinion on how to prune. Additionally, pruning is a mix of science and art — the science tells you if you make a certain cut what you can expect, the art tells you how to compose those cuts. Some may even say pruning is a bit of mysticism.

It's important to understand that there is no physiological requirement for pruning trees, including avocados. Trees survive quite well in the natural environment without any pruning or other forms of canopy management. Thus, when we discuss canopy

management in an orchard setting, we must start by understanding why we are pruning since it is not because the trees require pruning.

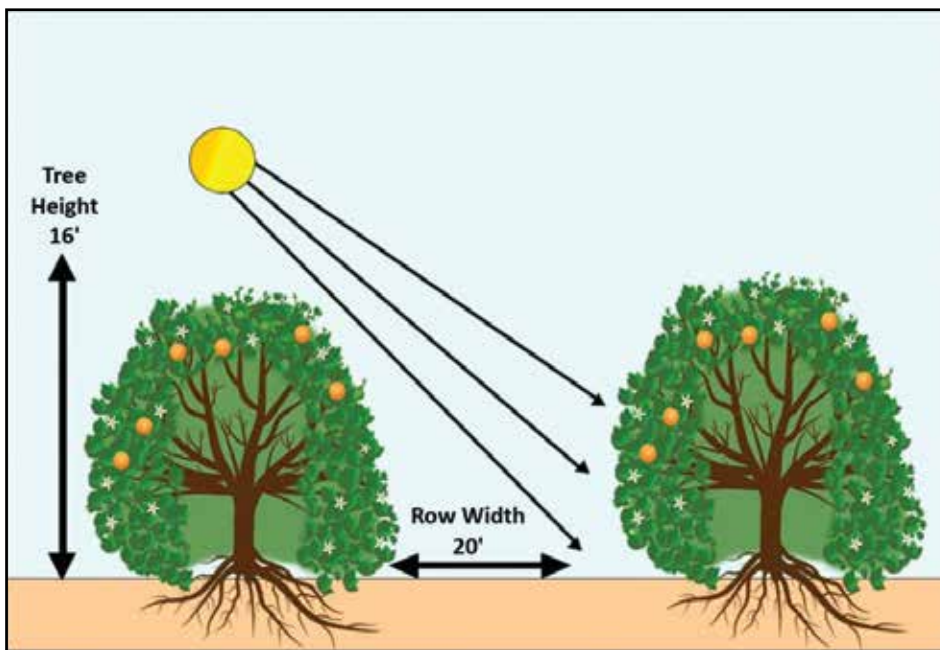
In an orchard setting, our goal is to achieve as much fruit production as possible within a given area. To reach this goal frequently requires canopy management through pruning to maximize light interception, maintain row clearance for various tasks (e.g., harvesting, spraying, irrigation maintenance), control tree height to reduce harvest costs, and remove dead, diseased or damaged limbs.

### Canopy Height

In California, avocados were traditionally very large trees, up to 30 feet or more. Today, the trend is to keep

trees shorter — generally no more than 15 to 16 feet — to reduce harvest costs and improve the overall quality of the grove. This is more in line with how other orchard fruit trees are managed; however, the challenge in avocados is that the trees are vigorous and want to grow tall.

For maximum canopy light interception, the rule of thumb is that tree height should not exceed 80% of the between-row spacing. For a grove with 20-foot row spacing, tree height should be kept to no more than 16 feet. This ratio ensures that light can reach the grove floor, and the tree canopy can be maintained to the ground by preventing the lower limbs from being lost to shading.



*A cartoon illustration showing the relationship between row spacing and tree height to maintain sunlight exposure all the way to the ground on the sides of trees. (Adapted from University of Florida 2024–2025 Florida Citrus Production Guide: Canopy Management.)*





*An avocado tree that needs skirt pruning (left) and one that has been properly skirt pruned (right).*

## Skirt Pruning

Skirting is pruning lower branches, from the ground to about knee high, to maintain an open space between the lowest branches and the ground. This space is necessary so that low hanging branches and leaves don't interfere with microsprinkler irrigation patterns. It's also important to keep fruit from touching the ground and creating a potential food safety risk. In wind prone areas, skirts should be kept as low as possible so there's less chance of wind blowing leaf litter and mulch out from under trees.

## When to Prune

In California, the challenge to pruning avocados is determining when to prune. Since the crop stays on the tree for more than 12 months there is never an opportunity to prune without crop loss. Thus, the decision becomes partly psychological: is it easier to see

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the fruit lost when they are small or large? Of course, the decision also partly depends on your pruning method.

Usually in an environment such as California, pruning after harvest removes both flowers and developing fruit (depending on harvest timing) and may expose fruit to sunburn. Thus, many growers prune following the on-crop harvest when the trees are in an off year to minimize fruit loss. In citrus, where late varieties such as Valencia also carry two crops at the same time, research has shown that if pruning is carried out at the same time each year the trees naturally adjust and yields stabilize after a few seasons. Similar trials have not been conducted in avocados, but it would be logical that they would respond similarly.

Aside from late fall and winter, when pruning could stimulate new growth that is easily damaged by frost, there really is no wrong time of year to prune avocados in California. However, if pruning later than about mid-May, areas exposed after pruning will need to be whitewashed to prevent sunburn of branches that were previously shaded. Whitewashing can be done with a thinned (50:50 paint:water) interior latex paint or, if organic, using a kaolin clay product such as Surround®. Also, pruning later than about mid-May will likely result in an additional year until the new growth flowers and sets fruit since new growth needs to be physiologically mature by late-August/early-September to receive the environmental signals necessary to flower the next spring.

## What to Prune

There is no prescriptive pruning program that can be applied to every tree. Rather, each tree needs to be looked at as an individual with a pruning strategy devised for that individual tree. This is easier than it sounds if you



*An example of a very low limb growing toward the ground that should have been removed when the tree was young.*

have a goal in mind, follow a few basic principles and know how the tree will respond to different types of pruning cuts.

Heading cuts are cuts that are made somewhere along the length of a branch between its tip and where it joins another branch. Heading cuts typically result in the stimulation of dormant buds below where the cut is made.

Thinning cuts are made at the base of a branch where it joins another branch. In other words, thinning cuts remove a branch in its entirety. Thinning cuts typically do not stimulate new growth.

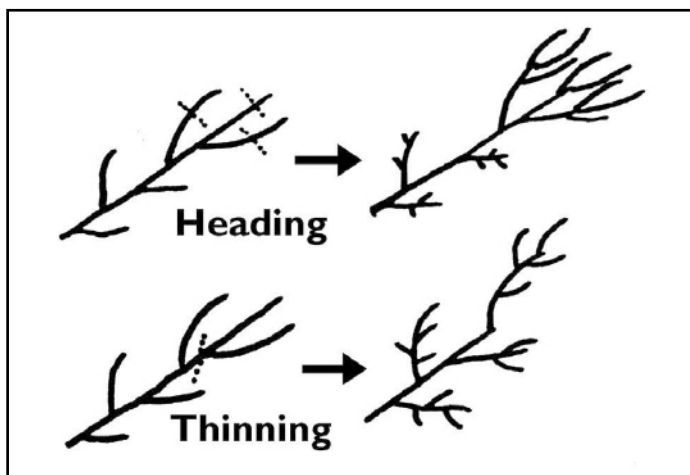
All pruning will consist of a combination of heading and thinning cuts. If you are trying to reduce tree size, you will want to predominantly make thinning cuts. But if you are trying to develop new growth, say to replace a limb that broke off under a heavy crop load, you will want to make a heading cut to stimulate growth.

## Young Trees

Young avocado trees, less than 5 years old, typically don't require pruning, except to develop good tree structure. Typically, a young avocado tree will have been tipped in the nursery to stimulate lateral branching and won't need any pruning the first year in the ground. After the first year in the ground, I like to see young trees pruned for structure. Very low lateral branches that are growing at a downward angle should be removed. Branches that cross from one side of the tree to the other should be removed. Multiple branches all growing into the same space should be thinned leaving only one branch in a given space — ideally, lateral branches should be uniformly distributed around the tree. Competing leaders should be thinned to encourage one leader. Any rootstock sprouts also should be removed.

If properly trained to develop good tree structure, avocados will





An illustration showing the difference between heading cuts and thinning cuts. Note the vigorous regrowth stimulated by the heading cuts compared with the response from the thinning cut. (Adapted from Virginia Cooperative Extension publication SPES-221P.)

typically not need pruning again until they begin to fill their allocated space, i.e., they begin to encroach on one another, most likely between 6 to 8 years old depending on spacing.

## Maintenance Pruning of Teenage to Mature Trees

Assuming young trees have been well trained, and structural issues have been corrected early in the life of the tree, young bearing trees and mature trees can be easily maintained with annual or every other year pruning. Your goals for maintenance pruning should be to:

- Maintain each tree within its allocated space in the grove
- Maintain tree height
- Maintain light penetration all the way through the canopy and to the ground

The space allocated to each tree depends on your tree spacing. Generally, avocados do not perform well as a hedge row and each tree should be maintained as an individual. Thus, if your trees are spaced 15 feet apart, each tree should ideally be about 14 feet wide

within the tree row. Between rows consider your grove layout and what activities need to occur throughout the year. Do you have wider rows periodically for harvest bins or will bins be placed in all the rows? Do you apply required sprays using ground-based equipment that you need to allow space for or do you only spray using aerial equipment?

Tree height will be determined by your row spacing. Remember, to allow light to reach the lowest part of the trees their height should be no more than 80% of the between row spacing.

Keep in mind when pruning to maintain tree height or width don't make your cuts and the final number what you're aiming for. You need to allow for regrowth. If you want to maintain your trees at 16 feet tall, you should probably be making cuts in the 12 to 13 feet range to allow for regrowth before you need to prune again.

To know if you have adequate light penetration through your trees, look at them. Do you see leaves all the way through the canopy or is the interior of the canopy a bunch of naked branches? If the answer is the latter,

then you need to make some strategic cuts to get light into the canopy. If the interior of your trees' canopies have good leaf cover that's good, but make sure you are maintaining the light penetration so you don't lose those interior leaves. For a detailed discussion of the light environment within an avocado tree see "Optimize Productivity by Pruning for Maximum Light," Spring 2019 *From the Grove*.

## Pruning Sanitation

Although growers prune their groves with good intention, the results can be disastrous if some basic principles of sanitation are not followed. First and foremost is to avoid pruning when trees are wet. When the canopy is wet, any fungal pathogens that may be in the canopy will release spores — fungal reproductive bodies — that can enter fresh pruning wounds. Pruning only during dry conditions will reduce this risk.

To further reduce the risk of disease spread, pruning tools need to be sanitized often — it's best to sanitize after pruning each tree. This is easily done using a spray bottle with a 25% household bleach solution or 70% ethanol solution. If you are pruning a tree with known disease issues (e.g., avocado branch canker), remove the diseased material from the grove rather than leave it on the grove floor.

Also of importance in California is Avocado Sunblotch Viroid (ASBVd; see "Sunblotch Alert! New, Faster Ways to Spot This Avocado Sneak Thief" on page 30 of this issue of *From the Grove*). Pruning easily spreads this disease, and disinfecting pruning tools is not enough to prevent the viroid from spreading. For this reason, growers should familiarize themselves with ASBVd symptoms and remove infected trees to prevent the unintentional spread. 🍌



*Recording the Field Trips with Tara episode featuring the Lyall family.*

## California Avocado Growers Add Value to Marketing with their Authenticity and Credibility

**S**ince its inception, the “What’s Inside a California Avocado” campaign has included California avocado growers in advertising, social content and public relations activities — bringing added value to the California Avocados brand through the growers’ authenticity and credibility among our target audience.

Research consistently confirms that consumers want to know more about where their food comes from and how it is grown, and that showcasing real growers in consumer content can foster connection and loyalty to the California Avocados brand. By integrating real growers and communication of key messages, the California Avocado Commission effectively differentiates the locally-grown fruit from other sources of supply, building perceived value and preference for California avocados among consumers and trade targets.

This season, growers from multiple California avocado growing districts have participated in California avocado market-

ing efforts, including being filmed and photographed in their groves to capture authentic and relatable content for advertising and social promotions, participating in retail events, being featured in retail signage and promotions and serving as spokespeople for the industry through media interviews.

As part of the creative campaign, California growers Jim and Daryn Miller, Andy Sheaffer and sons, Hayden McIntyre, and John Lamb, Robert Lamb, David Lamb and Maureen Lamb Cottingham were showcased in consumer media. In addition, Tara Axell Rosenthal and Sal Dominguez were the first growers featured in CAC’s new social media grower spotlights series — with more grower profiles to come.

To celebrate the start of the season, California avocado grower Rick Shade hosted a grove tour for 15 influencers in Carpinteria where he answered attendees’ questions and hosted picking demonstrations. The group then visited the Santa Barbara location of one of CAC’s retail partners, Bristol



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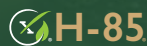
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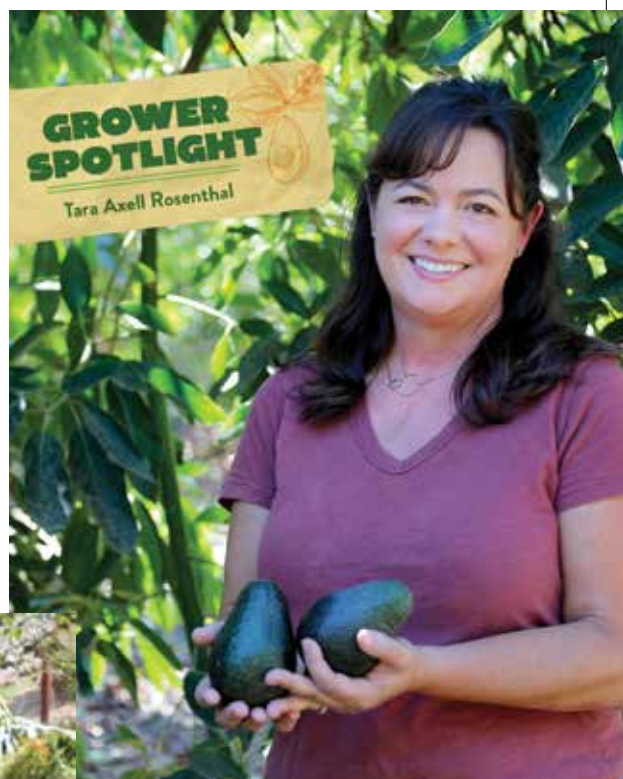


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California avocado grower Andy Sheaffer and sons are featured in one of the 2025 campaign's most prominent ads.



Tara Axell Rosenthal was the first grower featured in CAC's new grower spotlight series on social media.



The Lamb family graciously hosted 27 media, retail and foodservice partners as part of a highly successful, integrated 2025 grove tour.

Farms, where the influencers captured video and photos to share on their social media platforms. In just 48 hours, the influencers shared nearly 100 Instagram Stories featuring California avocados, Bristol Farms and Rick Shade's grove tour — generating 93,000 views and robust early-season buzz. The influencers will continue to share California avocado imagery and messaging through posts on their social platforms, driving significantly more views and engagement as the season progresses.

As part of the 2025 California Avocado Grove Tour, the Lamb family welcomed approximately 30 media, retail and foodservice professionals to Camlam Farms located in Camarillo, CA. Throughout the day-long tour, CAC featured

key messaging about the California avocado season while participants took part in live presentations about irrigation, sustainable production practices, harvesting, pollination and variety development. The tour also featured a Q&A session with the Lamb family, a guacamole making contest and a curated avocado-centric lunch on the grounds. Numerous media attendees interviewed the Lamb family and published their stories, with more forthcoming. (See "27 Attendees, 9 Stories (and Counting): Grove Tour Delivers for California Avocados" on page 12 for more information about this event.)

In addition, the Lyall family of Pauma Valley spent a day in their grove with Tara Beaver Coronado, host of the on-line series *Field Trips with Tara*. The segment, which featured



footage from the grove and interviews with the Lyall family about grove production and their history within the industry, launched online June 1.

Finally, to enhance the Commission's ability to connect with consumers through the authentic voice of growers, six growers hailing from various growing regions across the state recently agreed to serve as media spokespeople and participated in media interview training to ensure they are prepared for incoming media opportunities. The Grower Media Spokesperson Network consists of Daryn Miller (Cayucos), Jason Cole (Santa Paula), Michael Craviotto (Moorpark), Maureen Lamb Cottingham (Camarillo), Andy Lyall (Pauma Valley)

and Victor Araiza (Temecula).

These growers are prepared to speak with TV, digital and print outlets — in both on-farm and in-studio segments — and will be available throughout the season to share the stories of California avocado growers. An example of how growers can help promote fruit availability and share their stories through the media is the KSBY TV (Santa Barbara) television news segment dedicated to the start of California avocado season, with California avocado grower Rick Shade. It can be viewed on the internet at: [ksby.com/santa-barbara-south-coast/california-avocado-commission-predicts-375m-pounds-of-fruit-for-the-2025-season](https://ksby.com/santa-barbara-south-coast/california-avocado-commission-predicts-375m-pounds-of-fruit-for-the-2025-season). 🥑



*Rick Shade answered questions during a picking demonstration in an avocado grove in Carpinteria.*



## 2025 Cinco de Mayo Retail Promotions of California Avocados See Substantial Growth

**P**romoting California avocados for the Cinco de Mayo holiday presents an opportunity to secure a strong position for the fruit early in the season, build brand awareness and keep the volume pipeline moving on behalf of California avocado growers. Due to supply timing, retail support for including California avocados in Cinco de Mayo programs has been soft for several years. This season, however, conditions aligned such that growers and handlers had sufficient volume of the fruit on hand — enough to make retail partners feel comfortable with committing to the California Avocados brand in time for this popular meal and social event.

This year, the number of retailers promoting California avocados during the lead up to the event (April 29 – May 5) climbed significantly from three to 14 (a 367% increase). A variety of promotions showcasing the locally grown fruit took place in Albertsons/Vons, Bristol Farms, Gelson's, King Soopers/City Market, Mi Tierra, Mollie Stone's, New Seasons Market, Nugget Markets, Raley's, Ralphs, Safeway, Sprouts Farmers Market, Target and The Fresh Market. These promotions, which took place in the west and with select customers outside the west, contributed to an increase in branded displays and sales of California avocados during this time period. 🥑



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<p><b>Original Shredded Chicken</b></p> <p><b>97¢<sup>ea</sup></b></p> <p>See in store for details</p>	<p><b>3 for 99¢</b></p> <p>See in store for details</p>



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# Featured California Avocado Recipes from the 2025 Marketing Campaign

The summer edition of *From the Grove* features two of the recipes that are showcased in this season's advertising and social media campaign: *California Avocado Superfood Salad* and *Avocado Spinach Apple Smoothie*. The campaign communications also include key brand messages such as "California avocados are locally grown and responsibly farmed". These recipes originally were created for use in retail programs and for promoting the nutrition attributes of California avocados and healthy eating. Both are perfect for warm summer days. 🥑

## California Avocado Superfood Salad

Seven superfoods combine in this delicious and colorful salad: kale, spinach, walnuts, blueberries, sweet potato, tomatoes and creamy California avocados. For a main dish summer salad, top with grilled salmon.

**Serves:** 4

**Time:** 15 minutes

### Ingredients:

- 8 cups kale and/or baby spinach leaves
- 2 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil, divided
- 1/2 tsp. fine sea salt, or to taste
- 1 cup walnuts
- 1 cup blueberries
- 1 cup diced, cooked sweet potato
- 1 cup halved grape tomatoes
- 2 ripe, Fresh California Avocados, seeded, peeled and sliced horizontally



### Instructions:

1. Slice kale and spinach into fine shreds. Place in a mixing bowl and with clean hands massage half of the olive oil into the shredded greens. Place on a serving platter or individual plates and sprinkle with a little of the salt.
2. Heat the remaining oil in a medium skillet on medium heat. Add the walnuts and stir to coat with the oil. Toast for 2 to 5 minutes, stirring frequently and being careful not to burn them. Remove from the pan and let cool slightly. (This step may be prepared ahead of time or may be skipped if you prefer not to toast the walnuts.)
3. Meanwhile arrange the blueberries, sweet potatoes, grape tomatoes and avocado slices on top of the kale and spinach, leaving space for the walnuts.
4. Add walnuts to the salad and sprinkle the remaining salt over all.

**Serving Suggestion:** Serve with your favorite vinaigrette dressing on the side.





## ***Avocado Spinach Apple Smoothie***

“Avocado Smoothie” is one of the top 10 food-related avocado phrases that consumers search for on the internet, so the California Avocado Commission provides plenty of California avocado smoothie ideas for fans. One serving of this simple *Avocado Spinach Apple Smoothie* has 350 calories with 15 g dietary fiber and 5 g protein. The recipe is easy and refreshing, and it can be made into a tasty dessert using an ice cream maker (use the optional maple syrup or other sweetener if freezing).

**Serves:** 1

**Time:** 5 minutes

### ***Ingredients:***

- 1 cup coconut water, or more to preference
- 1 large ripe sweet apple, cored, peeled and diced
- 1 cup baby spinach leaves (or use ½ cup cooked, chilled spinach or other cooked greens)
- 1/2 ripe, Fresh California Avocado, seeded and peeled
- 1/8 tsp. cinnamon, optional
- 1 Tbsp. maple syrup or other sweetener, optional
- 1 scoop non-dairy protein powder, optional

### ***Instructions:***

1. In a blender or food processor combine all ingredients. Use smoothie, purée or frappe setting if available. If necessary, stop blender and carefully stir ingredients, then blend again until smooth.
2. Taste smoothie and add more coconut water to thin and/or sweetener and add-ins if desired.
3. Pour into a large glass or smoothie bowl and enjoy.

*\* Large avocados are recommended for these recipes. A large avocado averages about 8 ounces. If using smaller or larger size avocados adjust the quantity accordingly.*

# Sunblotch Alert!

## New, Faster Ways to Spot This Avocado Sneak Thief

**H**ey avocado folks! You know that sinking feeling when something's not quite right in your grove? Maybe the fruit isn't looking perfect, or the yields are a bit off. Well, one of the silent troublemakers that can cause these issues is the Avocado Sunblotch Viroid (ASBVd). It's a tiny, microscopic bugger that can lead to those frustrating scars and lower your profits.

For too long, finding ASBVd early was like searching for a dropped seed in the soil. The old tests just weren't good enough, especially when your trees looked healthy on the outside. This meant ASBVd could be quietly spreading, impacting your future harvests without you even knowing.

But good news is on the horizon! Here at UC Riverside, we've been busy developing some smart new tools to help you get the upper hand on this sneaky pest. Think of it as upgrading your old flashlight to a powerful spotlight. We've found a super-sensitive way to detect ASBVd, and we've been testing it right here in California avocado groves just like yours. This new tech can spot the viroid even when it's barely there, giving you an early warning system you've never had before.

### Why Catching Sunblotch Early is Money in Your Pocket

- **Stop the Spread Fast:** Finding ASBVd early means you can act *be-*

*fore* it infects more of your valuable trees. That saves you time, money on treatments and a whole lot of stress down the line.

- **Healthy Trees = Bigger Bins:** By finding and removing infected trees (or making sure your new trees are clean), you're keeping the rest of your grove healthy and producing those bumper crops you rely on.

- **Protecting Our California Avocados:** ASBVd isn't just your problem; it's a threat to all of us who grow avocados in California. Early detection is key to keeping our industry strong and competitive.

So, what are these new "spotlights" we've been working on? Let's take a closer look.

### Shining a Light on Sunblotch: dLAMP to the Rescue

We've been digging into some advanced science, and two techniques really stood out: **digital LAMP (dLAMP)** and **droplet digital PCR (ddPCR)**. Don't let the long names scare you. Think of them as super-detectives that can find even the tiniest clues of the ASBVd's presence in your trees (it's looking for its RNA, not DNA, but the idea is the same).

### Why dLAMP Could Be Your New Best Friend

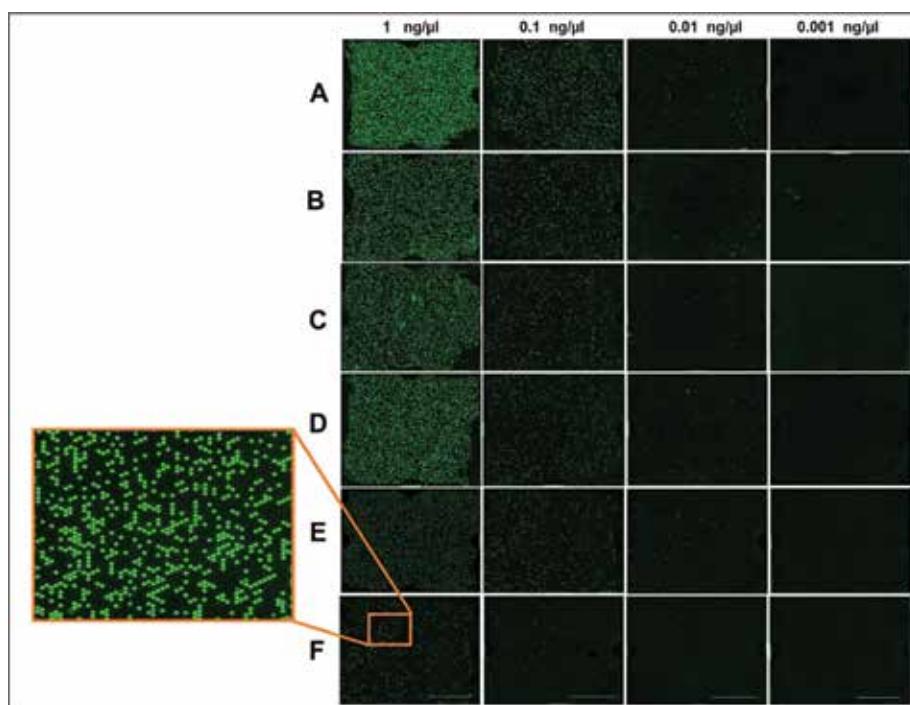
Imagine your old way of testing was like trying to see in a dimly lit room. dLAMP is like flipping on a super-bright light. It's a souped-up version of a technique called LAMP, and it's incredibly sensitive. Here's why it could be a game-changer for you:

- **Sees the Smallest Traces:** dLAMP can find ASBVd even when there are just a few particles hiding in the plant. This means we can potentially catch infections way earlier than before, even in trees that look perfectly fine.
- **Faster Results on the Horizon:** Right now it's a lab test, but the basic LAMP technology is known for being quicker than some older methods. We're working on making it even faster and easier to use in the future.
- **Only Looks for the Real Deal:** Our dLAMP test is designed to specifically find ASBVd, so you don't have to worry about getting false positives from other things in your avocado trees.

### Putting dLAMP to Work in California Groves

Over the last couple of years (2023-2024), our team visited eight





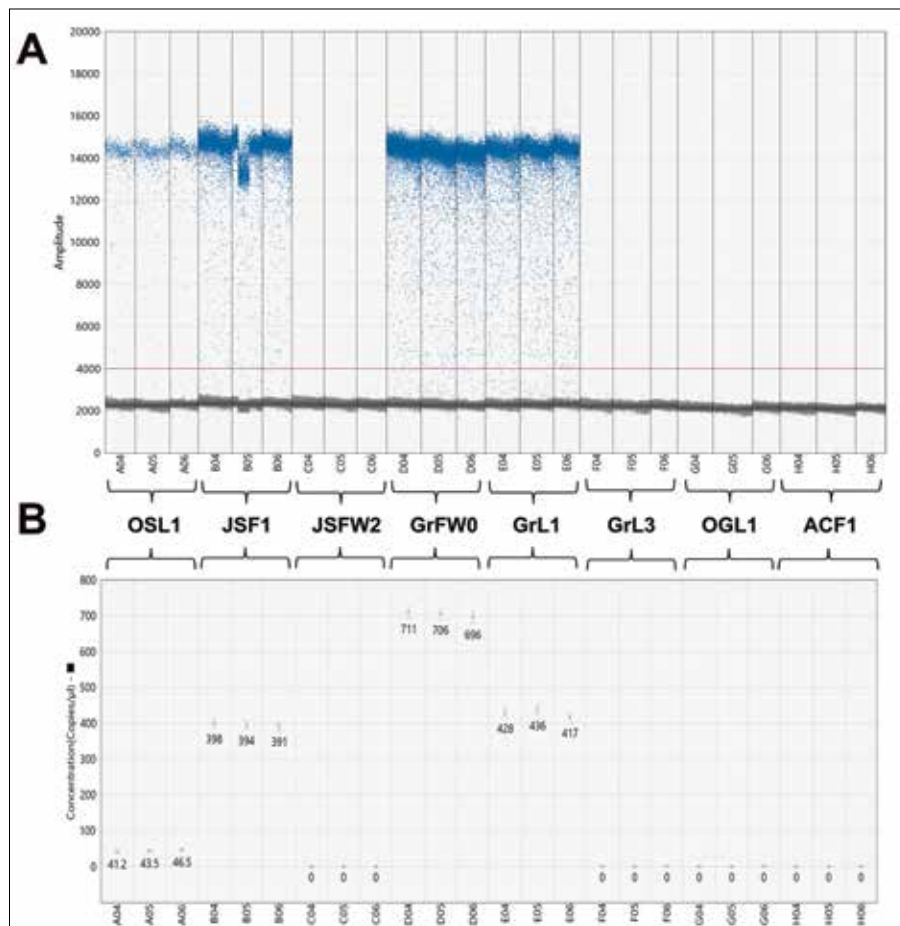
**Figure 1:** Think of this picture like a close-up view from our super-sensitive dLAMP test. Each little dot shows a positive signal for ASBVd. We tested different amounts of the viroid from both fruits (A-C) and leaves (D-F) and also tried testing single samples versus groups of samples to see how well dLAMP could find it.

avocado orchards right here in California – in Ventura, San Diego and Riverside counties. We took samples from all parts of the trees: leaves, fruits and even those tiny flowers. We looked at trees showing sunblotch symptoms and their healthy neighbors to see if the viroid was hiding silently.

We even tried putting multiple leaf samples together in one test – kind of like pooling your resources – to see if dLAMP could still find the viroid efficiently (Figure 1). This could save time and money on testing in the future.

## What We Discovered with dLAMP

The results were exciting — dLAMP was really good at finding ASBVd, even when there were only tiny amounts in the lab. When we tested the samples from orchards, dLAMP was able to detect the viroid in about 31% of them. This shows it's a reliable tool for finding sunblotch in real-world conditions (Figure 2).



**Figure 2:** This graph shows how sensitive our ddPCR test is. We tested different amounts of ASBVd from infected leaves (A) and fruits (B). The more of the viroid present, the stronger the signal. This helped us confirm that our dLAMP test also was working accurately.

## Comparing the New Detectives: dLAMP vs. ddPCR

We also used another powerful detective tool called **droplet digital PCR (ddPCR)**. Imagine ddPCR as counting every single tiny speck of dust to see how much dust is in a room. It's super accurate for measuring the exact amount of ASBVd in a sample.

### ddPCR: The Super Counter

- **Counts Every Tiny Bit:** ddPCR can tell us not just *if* the viroid is there, but *exactly how much* is present. This can be useful for understanding how the infection is growing in a tree over time.
- **Our Trustworthy Helper:** We used ddPCR to double-check the results we got with dLAMP, making sure our new dLAMP test was giving us the right answers.

### What We Learned Comparing the Detectives

Both dLAMP and ddPCR were excellent at finding ASBVd in the samples from your orchards. In fact, they gave us very similar results. This is great news because it means dLAMP has the potential to be an effective tool for regular testing in the future.

### What This Means for Your Grove

- **More Accurate Testing is Coming:** You may soon have access to more accurate and sensitive tests for ASBVd, which means you can catch it earlier than ever before.
- **Understanding Sunblotch Spread:** These new tools can help us learn more about how ASBVd moves through your groves, even

in trees that don't look sick. This knowledge will help us develop better ways to stop it.

- **Making Smarter Choices:** With more reliable testing, you can make better decisions about managing your orchard, like which trees need to be removed or which young trees you can trust are healthy.

### A Brighter Future for Your Grove: What's Next in the Fight Against Sunblotch

Our research has shown that these new detection tools, especially dLAMP, are a big step forward in the fight against ASBVd in California avocado groves. We're really excited about the possibility of getting these technologies into the hands of you, the growers, and other agricultural professionals.

### What We're Working on Right Now:

- **Making dLAMP Even Easier to Use:** We're exploring ways to simplify the dLAMP test so it could potentially be used right in your orchard for quick results. Imagine getting answers without having to send samples off to a lab!
- **Tracking Sunblotch's Movement:** Now that we have these super-sensitive tools, we can start to really understand how ASBVd spreads within and between groves. This will help us develop even better ways to prevent it.

- **Sharing Our Knowledge:** We're dedicated to keeping you informed through workshops, field days and articles like this one. We want to make sure you have the latest information and the best tools to protect your livelihood.

## What You Can Do to Protect Your Grove:

- **Keep a Close Eye:** Regularly check your trees for any unusual signs. Remember, early symptoms can be easy to miss.
- **Start Clean, Stay Clean:** Always use certified, disease-free budwood and seedlings. This is still the most effective way ASBVd spreads.
- **Get Tested If You're Unsure:** If you suspect sunblotch, don't wait! Get your trees tested using reliable methods. Talk to your local farm advisor or reach out to us for information on testing options.
- **Stay Informed:** Keep up to date on the latest research and best practices for managing ASBVd.

By working together and using these new powerful detection tools, we can make real progress in protecting California's valuable avocado industry from the threat of Avocado Sunblotch Viroid and ensure healthy, productive groves for many years to come. Stay tuned for more updates, and don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions. 🥑

*(Editor's Note: The authors – Fatemeh Khodadadi and Mehdi Kamali Dashtarzhaneh of University of California, Riverside – can be reached at: [fatemehk@ucr.edu](mailto:fatemehk@ucr.edu))*



## Are 500-Million-Pound California Seasons within Reach?

**E**ver since 2024 when many California avocado growers hit record-breaking yields on a per acre basis, industry observers have wondered what the upper limits are for the state's avocado production.

In 2024, some growers, especially in Ventura County, realized yields well above 20,000 pounds per acre. Those numbers were unexpected and were a big contributor to a total production that was more than 70 percent above the pre-season estimate. Instead of a crop predicted to be around 210 million pounds, the final number was nearly 365 million pounds. Was that a one-year glitch or a harbinger of things to come?

"I do believe we have the potential for 500- to 600-million-pound crops," said Patrick Lucy, president of Del Rey Avocado Company in Fallbrook, CA.

He is not predicting that those lofty numbers will be reached in 2026 but he said the potential is there. Lucy explained that the inaccurate pre-season estimate in 2024 was the result of several factors but the most important was the over-performance of young groves in the Ventura County region, many of which have been planted in high-density patterns with many more



trees per acre. Great growing conditions and good winter and spring rain allowed many of these trees to perform at an optimum level that season.

In typical fashion, 2025 has seen many of those great-yielding trees take a step back in terms of production. Though growers have employed many strategies to even out a grove's harvest from year to year, Mother Nature still plays a big role with individual trees still following the alternative year pattern.

Lucy said 2026 is poised to be an on-year once again for those Ventura County trees. In addition, California avocado acreage is increasing. Hence, he believes a crop above 500 million pounds is reachable in the foreseeable future.

Peter Shore, vice president of product management for Calavo Growers, is equally optimistic. "Five hundred million pounds is definitely a possibility," he said, and didn't rule it out for

next year. “The set on the trees looks very good for next season. Of course, there are a lot of factors that will come into play between now and next year’s harvest.”

The Calavo executive noted that the younger, newer trees are performing well for a variety of reasons, all of which point to higher average yields. “California has been planting increased acreage in Ventura, Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties over the past five years,” he said. “This acreage is on good growing land with adequate water supply utilizing the latest rootstocks.”

Keith Barnard, senior vice president of global sourcing for Oxnard, CA-based Mission Produce, also discussed the potential for increased avocado supplies from California in general terms without quantifying a target number to aim for. “Growing practices continue to evolve, which can considerably impact yields,” he said. “Growers have the potential to greatly increase their yields by implementing precision farming practices. We’ve seen some growers consistently produce double the state average yield.”

Barnard also noted that California’s avocado production potential is dependent on many factors including acres of production, evolving weather patterns, and available resources.

## The 2025 Season

While taking a guess as to what’s ahead is always an interesting pursuit, handlers and growers are currently in the midst of what is turning out to be an excellent California season.

Reviewing the year in late June, Shore said that California has had a good year, which started early as some growers jumped in with volume in January and February as demand was very high. He said the high demand for California fruit continued in March and

April, resulting in about 60% of the crop being picked and shipped by mid-June.

“Our peak volume weeks as an industry were in late April and May,” he said. “The harvest did include a higher volume of 84s and smaller, which was caused by the extreme heat that we experienced in September 2024. The heat caused the seed to die and the fruit did not size accordingly.”

Calavo expects to have good volume of California fruit through August, tapering off in September.

Barnard characterized the 2025 California season as being a strong one adding that “quality is excellent, volume is steady, and sizing is peaking on 48s and 60s. Overall, 2025 is expected to be a solid season for most California avocado growers. Early season pricing was particularly strong, and the market has remained relatively supportive as we’ve moved into the summer,” he said. “Timing and fruit size have played an important role in grower returns, and overall, the season has offered some solid opportunities across the state.”

In late June, he said the state had passed its peak weeks with volume to last into fall at much lower levels.

Lucy echoed the sentiments of the others that California growers have had a good season and should expect demand to be strong throughout late summer and into fall. He added that organic avocados are expected to be in short supply throughout the summer as the heavy early demand has exhausted most of California’s crop and Mexico also has diminishing supplies until its new crop begins in September.

## New Sources of Supply

2025 seemed to confirm that demand for avocados is continuing to grow as it has for most years in the past couple of decades. Lucy noted that there were very high prices for all fruit

including California avocados through the first half of the calendar year and it appears the late season FOB price will also be very good.

But growers are always worried about what’s on the horizon and there does appear to be new sources of supply on the cusp of entering the U.S. market. “Guatemala has been cleared for exporting to the U.S. They’re working through final details of this operation,” Shore said. “The state of Mexico is the next growing area that is in the process of certifying orchards and packing houses for the U.S. market.”

Shore, however, does not expect the U.S. market to be overwhelmed by new supplies. “Demand continues to grow in the United States and avocado marketing organization are doing a great job of growing that demand.”

He indicated that with U.S. consumption moving into the eight to nine pounds per capita arena, there is room for more supplies. Shore also expects that a good portion of the avocados grown in the state of Mexico will be marketed domestically to satisfy the growing avocado demand in nearby Mexico City.

Barnard also is very optimistic that California growers will continue to fare well in the years to come. “Even as other origins come into the mix, California avocados will always have a place in the market as a locally grown, high-quality piece of fruit,” he said. “Our diversified sourcing strategy leverages the unique harvest timing of every origin to provide a reliable supply of avocados year-round. California plays a key role in meeting consumer demand for avocados, especially during the spring and summer months.” 🥑





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