



Avocadosource.com: Offering Information to the Industry

By Tim Linden

Trying to figure out how much fertilizer or water to put on your avocado grove? Interested in the latest news about nitrogen applications from South Africa? Want to research a topic that was covered at an avocado symposium held in Spain a few years ago?

This information and much more is available at www.avocadosource.com, a website established and maintained by California grower Reuben Hofshi and The Hofshi Foundation. It is free of charge to anyone interested and is filled with a mountain of information. In fact, Hofshi said the site has more than 110,000 visitors per month and the average time spent by each visitor exceeds four minutes per visit. The amount of data downloaded is over 70 gigabytes per month. While visitors from some of the more common production areas such as California, New Zealand, Australia, Chile and Israel have long availed themselves of this

resource, Hofshi said the trend is toward a growing number of visitors from non-traditional but developing areas such as India, China, the Philippines, Vietnam and Iran.

His philosophy is “come one, come all” to learn about avocados and become a better producer. In fact, Hofshi bristles at the thought that anyone should charge for this information. Occasionally, he is delayed from downloading published papers or symposium reports, and that fact obviously rubs him the wrong way. “How can information be anything but free and timely,” he said.

Hofshi began dreaming about growing avocados decades

ago in the jungles of South America. He eventually moved to Fallbrook with his family in 1975 and began a lifelong love affair with the avocado. In those early days, he traveled to the University of California at Riverside seeking out information and became a determined student of the avocado. He joined research groups, attended symposiums and organized a few. Over the years, he amassed quite a bit of information and began thinking about ways of aggregating this information and getting it into the hands of many.

In the mid-1990s, the Australian avocado industry compiled some literature, AvolInfo, and placed it on a disk for sale. Hofshi didn't like that people had to purchase the information and thought it was too cumbersome and difficult to update. He decided to launch a website that might become the industry library for everything avocado.

"I began with the permission from the California Avocado Society to scan all of the CAS yearbooks and put them on line. Then I added the proceedings of the World Avocado congresses and the information from symposiums, older research and a very large number of slides provided by the authors from many countries."

With the help of Dr. Mary Lu Arpaia he contacted researchers and avocado groups all over the world and set about the task of putting that information on the website. All of the annual reports of research projects funded by the California Avocado Commission are there, as are all the annual research reports from New Zealand and South Africa. He has been able to collect quite a bit of information from Chile, Israel, and Australia, but he said the site is lacking a full body of work from Mexico. Over the years Hofshi has also developed several original tools such as the fertilizer and water calculators, as well as tools calculating nutri-

ent removal by the harvested avocados, analyzing mineral content of irrigation water and determining the amount of salts deposited by irrigation water. His collaborator on the website and for many of these calculator program is his son Shanti – "My computer guy" is how Hofshi puts it.

Moving forward, he would like to improve the search function on the site and also wants to continue converting all the documents to a PDF format for easy readability and searchability. Hofshi estimates that he has spent in the neighborhood of half a million dollars on development and maintenance of avocadosource.com since its launch 13 years ago. "Initially we spent a lot of money just scanning documents, proof reading them and putting them on the site."

He or his son is on the site frequently updating it, adding information or answering inquiries. He is especially proud of the fact that the site is purely educational with no hint of commercialism at all. His drive seems to be fueled by his early days looking for information. "Because I was an hour away from UCR, I could just drive over there and get a lot of information," he said. "Others can't do that. I want them to have the opportunity to access the same information and much more."

For the most part, he said researchers all over the world know about avocadosource.com and use it on a regular basis. But the same isn't true for growers. Anecdotally, Hofshi often hears that many growers, even in California, do not know that this valuable resource exists. He is obviously prejudiced as he has compiled the information himself, but a cursory look at the site would convince almost anyone that it is chock full of information. 🥑

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