

other organisms such as scab and *Cercospora* spot, or mechanical injuries. The fungus does not develop in actively growing fruits but causes a rot as the fruit ripens. Fruit lesions start as circular brown to black spots which enlarge, become sunken, and crack.

Avocado root rot (*Phytophthora cinnamomi*)

Trees in areas with poorly drained soils and/or which are subject to flooding are likely to be affected by this fungus. This is the most serious disease in most avocado producing areas of the world. Although many trees are infected with the fungus in Florida, the disease only appears to be serious if trees are subjected to flooded conditions. Leaves of infected trees may be pale green, wilted, and necrotic and terminal branches die back in advanced stages of the disease. Feeder roots become darkened and decayed and severely affected trees usually die.

Powdery mildew (*Oidium* sp.)

Powdery mildew covers undersides of leaves with a white powdery growth. Later, the white mildew disappears leaving dark, reticulate markings, which appear from the upper side as yellowish areas. Usually not serious enough to require control measures, this disease is most prevalent during the dry season.

Sun-blotch (Caused by a viroid)

Symptoms of infection include sunken yellow or whitish streaking or spotting and distortion of twigs, leaves, and fruit. It is transmitted through buds, seeds, and root-grafting of infected trees. There is no control for this disease, and infected trees should be destroyed. This disease is rare in Florida.

Algal leaf spot (*Cephaleuros* sp.)

Symptoms appear first on upper leaf surfaces as green, yellowish-green, or rust colored roughly circu-

lar spots. This disease is most prevalent during summer and fall months.

Diplodia stem-end rot (*Diplodia* sp.)

This rot begins at the stem end of the fruit and develops as the fruit softens. It usually is only a problem with immature fruit after harvest and can be prevented by harvesting only mature fruit.

Ripening and storage

Avocado fruits do not ripen on the tree. A mature fruit ripens in three to eight days after it is picked. Florida avocados ripen best at temperatures of 60° to 75° F (16° to 24° C). At higher temperatures, fruit ripen unevenly and develop off-flavors. Hydro-cooling and cold storage delays ripening and facilitates shipping to distant markets. The lowest safe storage temperatures are 55° F (13° C) for West Indian and 40° F (4° C) for most other Florida varieties. Chilling injury is characterized by a browning or darkening of the skin and/or grayish-brown discoloration of the flesh.

Uses

Compared to other fruits, avocados are highly nutritious and a good source of potassium and a moderate source of Vitamin A. Avocado fruit does not contain cholesterol and Florida varieties have less total fats than California varieties.

Cooking impairs flavor and appearance of avocados, but many satisfactory frozen products can be prepared. The most popular ways of serving the avocado are in salads, as appetizers, dips, and as "guacamole". The avocado has a variety of culinary uses and the delicate flavor appeals to the gourmet.