



# GROWN FROM OUR ROOTS



Have you noticed activity around the orchards lately? Neff Ranch is currently in the process of carefully pruning away non-productive shoots of the avocado trees which would eventually compete with the fruit producing scions.

Rancho Mission Viejo, situated in South Orange County nestled near the Pacific Ocean, provides a unique blend of abundant sunshine, well-drained soil and temperate coastal breezes which combine to make RMV a fertile location for citrus and avocado production.

The Neff Ranch team is proud to help Rancho MMC tend the Chiquita Canyon Parkway orchard with horticultural practices tailored to the multiple tree varieties planted, which include Hass Avocados, Valencia & Late Lane Oranges, Washington Navels, Tango Tangerines, Meyer Lemons and two kinds of limes – Bear's and Mexican.

These trees require a unique blend of soil and foliar nutrients, integrated pest management (using good bugs to eat the bad bugs), and other critical tree care practices. For example, careful pruning away of root shoots, which otherwise compete with the fruit producing scions, is our first step toward maximizing tree health and productivity.

## WHEN WILL RMV ORCHARDS BE FULLY MATURE AND PRODUCE FRUIT FOR RESIDENT USE?

Each variety has a somewhat different growth and maturity cycle, though they share the same pattern of spring bud break. Blossoms emerge in late March to early April, depending on the seasonal temperature changes from winter to spring. Each flower will produce a single fruit once each year. Managing the size of crop bloom can be important to protect against limb breakage from the heavy weight of fruit. Valencia Orange trees are unique for their ability to carry two crops: mature fruit, typically picked in May from the prior season's bloom, and the new baby crop from the March and April bloom of the current season. It's a lovely sight to see bright oranges clustered inside the tree canopy of green leaves, surrounded by white blossoms filling the air with a refreshing citrus aroma.

Hass avocados require nine months of development to mature, blooming in the spring. Typically, the California Avocado Commission will publish release dates by size of fruit, signaling when each size cohort has enough oil content to be legal. Hass avocado trees, is an early producer with the largest fruit (12-14 oz) ready for picking around Thanksgiving. Medium sized fruit (8-10 oz) reach their legal oil content targets by Christmas and then the smallest fruit by mid-January.

In the same way, the sugar content in oranges, measured in "Brix<sub>1</sub>", need to reach a certain level to be legally mature. For some citrus varieties, this will be around Christmas time, for others it will be in the spring. Oranges will be somewhat tart in the spring and without much pulp in the juice but will become sweeter with more pulp throughout the year, as the juice sacs break down. My advice is to plan your mimosa parties in the late spring and early summer!



Be on the lookout for additional crop updates and interesting information in future editions of Life on the Ranch.

We look forward to when homeowners can enjoy all the beauty and abundance which the Chiquita Canyon orchard will provide as a community asset for all Rancho Mission Viejo residents.

**Don Neff, President  
Neff Ranch, Ltd.**

(<sub>1</sub>) Brix – measurement of percentage of the sucrose, or sugar content.