

Principles of avocado canopy management

Avocadoes are one of the fruits whose production commercially is increasing day by day. Canopy management is vital in maximizing productivity of the avocado trees.

If left unpruned, avocadoes soon become over grown with dark overgrown unproductive canopies. Smaller trees are safer, easier to pick and easier to manage. Flowers and fruits develop best in the area that receives direct sunlight. This can be achieved by keeping trees relatively small or by keeping the canopy open. This allows sunlight to penetrate the tree. Canopy management is closely related to planting density ie the higher the planting dense, the more intense canopy management would be.

Getting started

When starting canopy management, consider 3 rules of thumb ie the tree height should not exceed 80% of the inter row planting distance eg for an inter row distance of 10m, tree height should nor exceed 8 metres.

The tree height should be less than 2.5 times the width of the open lane way. Most people opt for a lane way of 2 metres to enable machine passage during carrying out of field operations. The maximum height with this should not exceed 5 metres.

Minimize the size of the dark unproductive part of the tree. This is achieved by keeping the trees short or by having an open tree that allows light to penetrate.

Timing of pruning

Prune during cooler months of the year as it reduces vegetative regrowth and lower the risk of sun burn to exposed fruits and branches.

When possible, prune immediately after harvest to give the tree maximum time to produce and store carbohydrates for the next crop.

Time pruning so that it does not trigger vigorous regrowth that coincide and compete with flowering and fruit set otherwise yield and fruit quality would be low.