

# Persea americana

*Lauraceae*

## Tropical America

- Common names: Eng: avocado pear; Swah: mparachichi, mwembe mafuta.
- Ecology: The natural range for avocado is from Mexico south to Venezuela. Best grown in deep fertile sandy loams, but will grow in a wide variety of soils provided they have good drainage. The climatic range is moist plateau, wet lowland and transitional wet montane. In Tanzania it is planted by farmers in the northern areas and along the coast, 0-2,200 m. It is also a horticultural tree in most agricultural centres in the country.
- Uses: Food (fruit), oil (cosmetics), shade.
- Description: A densely leafed evergreen tree to 10 m. BARK: grey-brown. LEAVES: large, alternate, to 20 cm long, glossy dark green above, veins very clear, young leaves pink then bright green. FLOWERS: small and abundant in large terminal heads, pale yellow, only 1 in 5,000 producing fruit. FRUIT: large, round to pear shaped, to 25 cm, hanging heavily on the tree, the central seed surrounded by a thick layer of yellow-green flesh.
- Propagation: Grafting materials (improved varieties), seedlings, wildings, direct seeding.
- Seed info.: No. of seeds per kg: about 15. Germination is good and takes about 6 weeks,
- treatment: not necessary.
- storage: use fresh seed.
- Management: Requires no management once established, can be side pruned to obtain desired shape. Fast growing.
- Remarks: The fruit is very nutritious, rich in fat, protein and vitamins. Bark leaves and seeds are toxic to browsing livestock. Difficult to intercrop due to its dense shade, but beans can be planted with young trees. It also competes for nutrients through its dense shallow root system. Trees growing under good conditions may need stimulation to form flowers and fruit. Cut the roots in a trench around the tree or narrowly ring-bark the trunk. There are some 300 named varieties of avocado and grafting is necessary to maintain quality.

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