OBSERVATIONS ON THE ADVERTISING OF SPECIALTY FRUITS

Col. C. F. Ivins

Homestead

Last year we had the pleasure of outlining to the Society the situation in the avocado and lime industry during the post-war years. We talked about the industry's long struggle to raise the quality of fruit shipments which culminated in the formation of the Avocado and Lime Administrative Committees. These Committees have accomplished much in the past three years in holding back over-eager growers and shippers from forwarding to market immature fruit that would never ripen. In general, we believe that by far the majority of fruit which leaves the state now is of proper quality.

Both fruits are highly perishable. If the fruit does not sell within about ten days its quality deteriorates rapidly. This situation causes any such fruit to be regarded with some suspicion by both the consumer and the retailer. The problem resolves itself into the question of how are we going to make the fruit move before it spoils. In effect, this is the job of the Florida Avocado and Lime Commission which is now starting its third year. It is up to this organization to get that fruit to rapidly bridge the final two-foot gap between the produce bin and the shopping cart. That last two feet is the "pay-off journey but that gap presents more obstacles than in getting it down from the branches of the highest tree.

Let us first examine the characteristics of these two fruits. First, they are specialty-type tropic or sub-tropic fruits of small production. Not having enjoyed the wide advertising of the orange or banana, they and their uses are little known to many housewives. Neither fruit may be eaten out of hand upon purchase, but must be taken home and in most cases combined with other foods and seasonings before it can be consumed. The lime is far too sharp for the average person to take undiluted and not much of it may be taken at one time. It is doubtful if the average person would care to consume more than one or two limes a day no matter how much iced tea or Tom Collins they may drink. The avocado is rather rich and buttery in texture so our friend the average person is unlikely to eat more than one a week even if they are avocado enthusiasts. Usually they will cut the avocado up in various types of fruit or vegetable salads where the smooth bland texture contrasts with the acid of other fruits and the spice of the dressings.

These characteristics profoundly affect the quantities in which the housewife buys the fruit. That type of promotion where a housewife is expected to buy a ten-pound sack of oranges or potatoes does not work with our fruits. In effect, we find that trying to "buy" the market by heavy saturation of radio, television and newspaper advertising does not stimulate sales commensurate with the heavy expense involved. We must, therefore, look to other cheaper means to get our fruit to make that last important jump into the market cart.

Here are some of the methods we are using or contemplate using in the near future:

Public Education

A publicity agent in New York with a well-staffed kitchen prepares new and interesting recipes together with attractive pictures of same and distributes them by syndicates to the women's pages of the nation. Thus many women through seeing these recipes and pictures gain a sense of familiarity and confidence with our products.

Trade Contacts

A consumer can buy only what is in a store. It, therefore, becomes necessary to get our products into the stores. In order to do this we must make proper contact with the trade. This function is becoming more difficult. Buying in chain stores, particularly of new products, is done by committees specially set up for that purpose. Since these people are not too accessible, personal call campaigns must be backed up by direct mail and trade journal advertising.

Consumer Advertising

Advertising in magazines, newspapers, radio and television is extremely expensive. It
is an area of struggle for the strong and powerful. Those with small budgets should stay out of this jungle.

Point-of-Sale Activity

Most advertisers will admit that this is the place to cause the product to take that final jump into the market basket. Since our products are not staples we must consider them as impulse items; therefore, a mass display, a prominent location, some promotional material, or a word from the clerk is likely to inspire Mrs. Shopper to put those avocados and limes where we want them to go. The big question is "how do we get this activity in several hundred or thousands of stores."

We are trying a scheme now to subsidize our shippers by paying them one-half the cost of such advertising as they generate in markets they select. It is expected that the shipper's receiver in that market will sponsor point-of-sale activity in the local stores by building displays and gaining the support of the produce manager. Our scheme is for the shipper to send in his plan in advance so that it can be approved. For a small sum we can exercise surveillance over such programs to see if they are being energetically pushed. This scheme is a new one with us and we are all hoping that it will work.

We mentioned a moment ago that limes and avocados could not be eaten alone but must be eaten with other foods. This fact, instead of being a handicap, may turn out to be a great advantage. Most of these foods which are usually combined with our products are manufactured or distributed by commercial concerns far larger, stronger and wealthier than we. If we can convince the tea and liquor people that limes advertised and promoted with their product will increase their sales, they will go to considerable lengths to bring this message to the public's attention at little cost to us. Consider the salad dressing and mayonnaise industry. They have to advertise their products with something since they are too rich or spicy to be eaten as they come from the container. Certainly the avocado would make an excellent vehicle for these people. They have only to be convinced. Last summer the Commission made preliminary contact with The Tea Council of America, Tetley's Tea, Lipton's Tea and Onion Soup; Four Roses Gin, Schweppes Quinine Water, Puerto Rican and Bacardi Rums, Canada Dry Beverages, Best Foods and Hellman's Mayonnaise, General Foods, etc. We expect that we will get considerable cooperative work from these people as well as a lot of consumer education, recipe and point-of-sale activity at little cost.

In Florida we hope to capitalize on State pride in putting over our product through talks before Service Clubs, Ladies' Clubs, Garden Clubs and the like. We are working on a plan to gain the support of many hotels and restaurants by exhibiting our fruit therein with attractive displays.

There are no limits to advertising and promotional schemes. We have dreamed up a scheme which is now operating and is based on various characteristics and circumstances which seem to mesh nicely. As you probably know, the Avocado tree can be grown from seed. We are advertising that fact in the magazine of the National Federation of Garden Clubs. We believe that many women up north are frustrated gardeners during the winter months and would enjoy raising an exotic tropical tree.

Luckily, this period coincides with our avocado season. It is our hope that many women will buy avocados to enter this contest and will, of course, serve the fruit before planting the seed, and acquire a taste for it. We have offered a prize of $100 for a picture showing the best display of these young trees. In effect, this is a gimmick which seems to have considerable possibilities. The National Federation of State Garden Clubs is a large organization and we believe a thorough understanding of its functioning may reveal some excellent opportunities if same are not handled in an obviously commercial manner.

We could go on at length discussing the many ways in which we try to increase the public demand for Florida avocados and limes. The point that we wish to make for the benefit of those interested in new specialty tropical fruit is that for certain it will meet lots of competition and the inertia of the
DEKLE: LYCHEE BEETLE

trade; its uses will not be known and the funds to promote it will be small. Therefore, it would seem that the most economical method of promoting your fruit would be:

Publicity of the women's page type.
Publicity of the front-page type. A Lychee Queen, Mango week, etc.
Trade advertising and contacts.

A LEAF BEETLE FEEDING ON THE STEMS OF LYCHEE

George W. Dekle
State Plant Board
Gainesville

A native leaf beetle of the Family Chrysomelidae, Exema nodulosa (Blatchley), in the larval stage was found feeding on lychee, Litchi chinensis Sonner, in stems $\frac{1}{2}$ inch to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in diameter at Nokomis, Florida during October, 1956. Over one hundred trees in one grove were found infested with one to eight larvae. Stem punctures and semi-girdling of the stems were the principal damages observed.

John C. Wilcox, in his publication "Leaf Beetles of Ohio (Chrysomelidae: Coleoptera)," mentions the subcylindrical beetles as being of little economic importance. George B. Vogt, Entomologist, U. S. National Museum, confirmed the State Plant Board's identification of Exema gibber (Oliv.). However, he commented as follows: "I have carefully compared these beetles with the paratype of Exema nodulosa (Blatchley) here in the U.S.N.M. and consider them conspecific. You will find this name listed as a synonym of Exema gibber (Oliv.) (actually Fabricius 1798) in Leng's catalogue. Since there is considerable doubt about application of this name, I think it best to use nodulosa. Blatchley (1913) described this species from 10 specimens beaten from scrub oak (Quercus sp.) near Arch Creek, Sanford and Ormond, Florida. In Barber's manuscript notes: The range extends to Shreveport, La. (on Crataegus - Cushman), Victoria, Lovelady, Marshall (on Salix), Trinity (on Quercus) and Goliad, Texas. Four large females from Orlando, Florida, April-June, 1908, were in pecan (Russell)."

Other State Plant Board records include adults on oak (Quercus sp.), Orlovista, Florida, October, 1948, O. D. Link; adult resting on leaf of groundsel (Baccharis halimifolia L.), Lebanon Station, Fla., October, 1955, G. W. Dekle, Dr. L. A. Hetrick, Entomologist, College of Agriculture, University of Florida, at Gainesville, has collected both larvae and adults feeding on blackberry and dewberry (Rubus sp.) during March and April in the Gainesville area.

The interesting account by W. S. Blatchley in his publication "Coleoptera of Indiana" on the characteristics and habits of the tribe (Chlamydidini) in which Exema nodulosa (Blatchley) is found is as follows:

"Short, robust, cylindrical or subquadrate beetles of a dull metallic or blackish hue, having the eyes large, emarginate; thorax and elytra covered with wart-like tubercles; antennae widely separated, short, serrate and received in grooves on the side of prosternum; scutellum truncate behind and with a median tooth in front which fits into a notch in base of thorax; elytral suture with minute teeth each side which dovetail between one another. The legs are closely contractile and when disturbed the beetles draw them and the antennae in and feign death. They then resemble the excrement of certain caterpillars so closely as to render their detection difficult, unless the collector is in especial search for them, and it is said that birds will not pick them up for the same reason. The larvae of this and part of the next tribe live upon the surface of leaves, and have the curious habit of enclosing themselves in compact cases, composed of their own excrement, which they mould into shape by means of their mandibles. They carry their cases about with them by protruding the front part of their bodies through the open extremity.

Point-of-sale activity to include display material.

Tie-in with big manufacturers — probably ice cream — frozen foods, etc.

Special schemes which fit the characteristics of the fruit.

Forget consumer advertising — it is too costly.