

Plant Raisers' Award

Avogrey Orchard: David and Judi Grey

The RNZIH Plant Raisers' Award is granted to any nominated individual or organisation who has raised in New Zealand a cultivar(s) considered to be sufficiently meritorious.

Avogrey Orchard near Gisborne – owners David and Judi Grey (Fig. 1) – are awarded the 2022 RNZIH Plant Raisers' award for their three new avocado (*Persea americana*) selections: 'GreyStar', 'Eclipse', and 'Titan'.



Fig. 1 David and Judi Grey, alongside one of their new avocado selections. Photo courtesy of the *Gisborne Herald*.

These new green-skin avocados have been selected from open-pollinated seedlings of the cultivar 'Sharwil' as their starting point. 'Sharwil' is an Australian-raised selection marketed as a gourmet avocado because of its exceptional fruit quality. 'Sharwil' is also noted to be resistant to pests and diseases, but this cultivar crops poorly under New Zealand conditions.

Avogrey Orchard has selected their three new cultivars for superior fruit quality and yield. All are protected by Plant Variety Rights and are available to commercial growers only, subject to royalty payments and marketing controls. Astronomy names are used to describe their "out of this world" qualities: yellow flesh colour, dense, creamy texture, nutty taste, and with no strings or discoloration.

Avogrey® AVO009 'GreyStar' (Fig. 2) is seen as the main selection, with superior flavour and a long season of production. The tree tends to be upright, and crops well from a young age (even in the first year from planting). Fruit size is medium to large and produced from December to March (and later, even to June). Propagation material is currently being trialled in Australia and South Africa. 'GreyStar' was selected from a seedling of 'Sharwil'.



Fig. 2 Fruit on tree of Avogrey® AVO009 'GreyStar'. Photo courtesy of Avogrey Orchard.

Avogrey® AVO010 'Eclipse' (Fig. 3) is probably a spontaneous cross between 'Sharwil' and 'Reed', and selected for producing late in the season. The fruit is 'Reed'-like but more ovate, and matures later than 'Reed'. Fruit hangs on the tree well, through to June and beyond, and is resistant to ripening disorders.



Fig. 3 Mature fruit of Avogrey® AVO010 'Eclipse'. Photo courtesy of Avogrey Orchard.

Avogrey® AVO011 'Titan' (Fig. 4) was developed from 'Sharwil' and shares Sharwil's rich, nutty flavour and creamy texture. 'Titan' avocado fruit are very large; typically 12–15 cm in length and 8–10 cm across and often weighing more than 700 g (compared to 400 g for the other two selections). The fruit has relatively small stones which mean 'Titan' fruit contain a large proportion of edible flesh for their size.



Fig. 4 Cut fruit of Avogrey® AVO011 'Titan'. Photo courtesy of Avogrey Orchard.

These new green-skinned cultivars may be set to change the face of the avocado production industry.

The Grey family are pioneers of selecting and growing avocado, dating back to about 1920. David and Judi Grey's work was profiled in the *New Zealand Garden Journal* (Vol. 23, No. 2, Dec 2020) and featured in an episode of *Country Calendar* (29th August 2021).

**Citation prepared by
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