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Alternative fruit & nut crops.

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The fruit and nut species described in this Journal are as diverse in climatic requirements and characteristics as they are in commercial or ornamental interest. Bananas, for example, are Western Australia's main tropical fruit crop and Carnarvon produces about 60 to 70 per cent of the State's supply, worth some $5 million annually.

At the other end of the scale, exotic tropical fruits, such as jackfruit and sapodilla, have little prospect of commercial development in the South-West of Western Australia.

In countries where tropical and sub-tropical fruits grow well, they are tree-ripened and picked fresh daily for market. Potential growers in Western Australia would have to develop suitable handling and marketing methods to present these fruits at their best.

Significant plantings of avocados and kiwifruits have already been established in the South-West. The success of a local industry will depend on using the best available technology and maintaining high quality standards.

Nut crops have aroused considerable interest, despite the bigger (20 hectares) plantings needed for a viable orchard and the long time required to cover commercial establishment costs.

Between these extremes are many species that can flourish in the right combination of soils and climate. Even if payable markets are unknown or unproven, many people will be interested in growing them on a small scale or in the home garden.

This Journal is a guide to interested people on the cultivation and general requirements of the different fruit and nut species, whether they have commercial or purely ornamental interest.

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Prospects for the South-West

Cover: Fruit markets have brightened up their sales areas, as Gary Peters' cover shows.