

**TREE AND VINE NOTES****October 2003****ALMOND LEAF SCORCH FIELD DEMONSTRATION**

Monday 20 October

10:00 to 11:00

UC Cooperative Extension Farm Advisors Brent Holtz and Maxwell Norton will demonstrate what almond leaf scorch disease looks like and how it appears different from leaf burns resulting from other causes. ALS is becoming more common in the Central Valley and growers need to know how to identify and manage the disease which has no cure.

Location: Orchard Drive between Gerard and Mission, S-E of Merced.

Going south on 99 take Childs Ave exit and go East to Orchard (you cannot turn left at Mission).

Going north on 99 turn right on Mission. If you miss it, turn right on Gerard.

The ALS trees are wheel chair accessible and there is no charge.

For more information: Maxwell Norton 385-7403

NEW HIGH COLOR, HIGH FLAVOR APRICOT RELEASED

USDA has released a new apricot variety called **Nicole** that has a deep-orange color, and a sweet flavor. It is adapted to any area where cots do well. Nicole will need to be inter-planted with another variety because it needs a pollinizer variety. Contact your local nursery about trying out this variety.

NEW GRAPE RELEASED

USDA has released a new seedless grape called the **Thomcord**. It is a cross between the Thompson seedless and the Concord. It is blue-black in color, seedless, and ripens the last of July to mid-August. It has a concord flavor that is not as strong as the original Concord variety and should be better suited to our climate. Contact your local nursery about trying out this variety.

NEW BOOK OUT ON AG LABOR MANAGEMENT

Increased productivity, lower turnover, happier workers and increased profitability are the results of up-to-date labor management. The newly updated and expanded book on ag labor management is now available in both English and Spanish. Written by our own Gregory Billikopf, Personnel Management Farm Advisor for NSJV, this book will be helpful for any farmer or rancher.

You can read the book for free at: www.cnr.berkeley.edu/ucce50/ag-labor/

Or for a hard copy, call Gregory at 209/525-6800

We have a copy you can view at the Merced Cooperative Extension office.

PREDICTING LACY SCAB DAMAGE IN PRUNES. BY FRANZ NEIDERHOLZER

It was a wet bloom period this spring, and lacy scab damage is extensive in some prune blocks. However, UC research suggests that, based on current USDA grading standards, scab damage alone may not result in a “substandard” fruit grade for a specific lot. This is because many of the scab damaged portions of the fruit skin are hidden in the wrinkles formed during drying. With support from the California Prune Board and Sunsweet Growers, Richard Buchner, UC Farm Advisor in Tehama County, and Bill Olson, UCCE Farm Advisor in Butte County, have developed a grading system for fresh prunes to predict “scoreable” dried fruit scab damage for that fruit. A “how-to” protocol for this system is available from our office in Yuba City. Please call me (Franz) at **(530) 822-7515** for further information

EUTYPA DIEBACK OF APRICOT, CHERRIES AND GRAPE by Maxwell Norton

Grapes, cherries and Apricots are susceptible to Eutypa dieback disease which is spread by rain in the fall and early winter. For that reason we try to prune apricots and cherries during the summer or early fall well before the rains begin. If you are unable to prune early then wait till just before bloom when spore levels are lower. With grapes we wait till February if possible because as winter progresses the number of spores floating in the air decreases.

PRUNING ALMOND TREES AFTER HARVEST by Brent Holtz

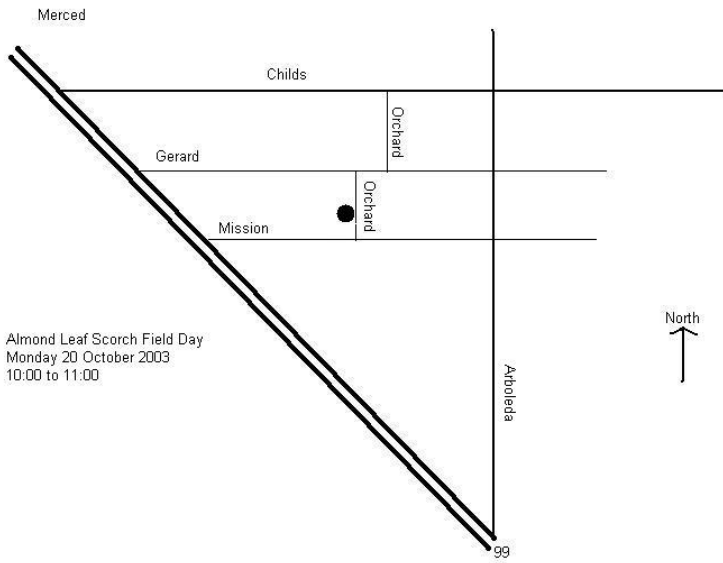
A pruning trial was conducted by Wilbur Reil (UCCE Yolo and Solano Counties) at Harry Dewey’s almond orchard which compared pruning mature Nonpareil trees each year in October, November, and December. Yield, trunk growth and leaf analysis were taken each year. The trial was designed to examine if there were any deleterious effects to trees from pruning before leaf fall. The fall is a good time to prune out many growers believe they need to wait until January or February before they can start pruning.

In Wilbur’s study, pruning mature almond trees in October and November, before leaf fall, had no effect on yield, growth or nutritional levels when compared to dormant pruning. Removing limbs after harvest should therefore have no adverse effect on the yield or nutrients levels the following year. Pruning in the fall can provide work at a time when few other activities occur in almond orchards. Wilbur’s paper can be found in California Agriculture May-June 1991-Vol.45, No.3.

Also, I have seen what I believe are *Phytophthora* pruning infections, where the fungus entered the tree at the site of a pruning wound. In order for this to occur I believe moisture must have been present at the time of pruning, most likely either rain or fog. Also, there is a new disease in the San Joaquin Valley called Silverleaf, caused by the fungus *Chondrostereum purpureum*, which forms leathery fruiting bodies (mushrooms) in clusters on tree trunks and scaffolds. This fungus releases its spores during wet weather and can infect pruning wounds. Thus, I prefer that growers prune right after harvest when the weather is still nice and the wounds will dry quickly.

Choosing an Almond Variety by Roger Duncan

I often get asked which almond varieties I would plant if I were starting a new orchard. This is a very difficult question to answer. Although yield is very important, there are other important considerations as well. Disease and insect susceptibility, bloom and harvest date, marketability, even personal preference need to be considered. If you are a small grower with only a few acres and no equipment, you may consider planting what your neighbor has so sprays and harvests can be coordinated together. Three varieties are generally better than two for pollination, but again small growers need to consider the expense of a third harvest. Many handlers now accept Butte and Padre harvested together. There are several new varieties not widely planted that have performed well in University variety trials. However, when planting any new variety a grower assumes some risk of potential unknown drawbacks. You can pick up a summary of our regional almond variety trials in our office. Many of these varieties can also be viewed at our office demonstration “orchard” along Service Road.



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