



The official publication of Riverside County Farm Bureau, Inc.

A private, nonprofit organization serving farmers throughout Riverside County since 1917

Citrus Greening - Southern CA Citrus Under Threat

By Sherli Leonard

That’s not news, you’re thinking. Over the past two decades, and the last five years in particular, the loss of citrus groves on the north and west sides of town has become the norm. Now, the tall and stately, gracefully leaning palms in northwest Redlands barely peek over the tops of ‘groves’ of warehouses – one warehouse can cover more land than two ten-acre citrus groves, and “groves” of new residential rooftops replace the once green landscape.

As if the development threat were not enough, nature now threatens to doom citrus groves all over the Inland Empire.

A disease with an oxymoronic name has landed in San Diego County. Citrus Greening Disease originated in Asia, made its way to Florida in 2005, and now to Southern California.

Known officially as huanglongbing disease (HLB), this affliction is spread by the Asian citrus psyllid, an aphid-like insect less than one-eighth inch in size. The insect feeds on the new flush of citrus, causing burned tips and twisting of the new leaves. The insect also can spread the bacterium that causes HLB disease.

The disease also attacks ornamental landscaping plants, especially the very popular orange jasmine. According to Bob Knight, volunteer coordinator for the Inland Orange Conservancy, this could be the avenue that HLB travels to reach the region’s citrus groves.

“The psyllid vigorously attacks these favored ornamental plants, and landscapers ship them all over the place,” said Knight. “That’s how they’re getting from one place to another.”

Once in Redlands, the psyllid-caused HLB would have the potential of sounding the death knell for regional citrus groves.

HLB causes severe losses

HLB is considered a serious citrus disease in the world. A bacterial disease, it greatly reduces crop yields and can kill trees within two years. A grove with a five percent infection rate can go from 20 percent to 40 percent to 80 percent over a four year period. One citrus producer in Florida lost 40,000 trees in one year to the disease.

HLB has severely affected citrus production in Asia, Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and Brazil. The Asian citrus psyllid was first reported in Florida in 1998, and the disease manifested itself in 2005. As of early in 2008, all 32 Florida counties containing commercial citrus production have HLB. Diseased trees are non-productive and must be removed and destroyed to prevent further spread of the disease. Florida growers are fighting HLB by removing infected trees and suppressing the psyllid through spraying programs which

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Welcome New Members

We would like to "Thank You" for becoming part of the Farm Bureau Family.



Meet Dr. Marlene Salazar - Pongs RCFB Associate Director

The Riverside County Farm Bureau is proud to announce the election of its newest Associate Director to the Board of Directors.

Dr. Marlene Salazar-Pongs has "...very long roots in San Bernardino, Riverside, and Santa Barbara Counties of California." Her father's family (Salazar) were one of the first seven families of the Agua Mansa settlement along with the Bandini family of California to receive land parcels. Her family were shepherds and raised livestock between New Mexico and Southern California. Her mother's family managed vineyards for the Barton family of Loma Linda. Marlene is a dentist and a graduate of the Loma Linda School of Dentistry.

Marlene grew-up with subsistence farming in the Colton area and today owns and operates a wholesale nursery with her husband, Carl, in the Greenbelt District of Riverside. She says, "...my passion is with the land and keeping the benefits in our own hands. I instill the love for it (land) into my children." She goes on to say, "I'm happy to be a part of the Riverside County Farm Bureau because it is a grassroots organization."

Marlene and her husband have four children ages 13, 12, 9, and 5.

Congratulations to Sonalei Amador

Sonalei Amador of Indio is one of six students named as a Regional Student Winner in the 2008 *Image this....* story-writing contest. The story is titled "*The Apple of My Eye.*" This yearly story-writing contest is sponsored by the California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom.

The six winning stories will be illustrated and professionally published as a book and will debut during the California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom's National Agriculture Week celebration event in Sacramento on March 17.

Sonalei Amador is a 7th grader at Grace Academy. The Riverside County Farm Bureau would also like to thank Jonna Stiff of Grace Academy for their participation in the contest.

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Play it safe when using your cell phone on the farm

By Mike Klimenko, Farm Bureau Group Manager

Cell phones are wonderful communications tools, and with the continual technological improvements, their use and reception is becoming much more readily available in rural areas.

With the advent of cell phones, farmers and ranchers were able to instantly talk with or send text messages to other farmers, employees, family members, the parts store...and the list goes on.

As with any tool, however, cell phones come with some built-in hazards. Not the same kind of hazard as a tractor's PTO, perhaps, but misuse of a cell phone can result in a very serious mishap.

A California state law was recently enacted making it illegal to talk on a cell phone while driving, unless a hands-free device such as a Bluetooth is used. It is also against that law to send or read text messages while driving, which only makes common sense anyway. Distractions that have been traced to cell phone use are known to have resulted in several deaths and serious injuries from vehicle accidents.

But these accidents aren't limited to roads and highways. Using a cell phone while operating a tractor or other piece of farm equipment can also have tragic results.

A list of safety tips has been compiled by a group called cellphonesafety.org. While these tips are intended primarily for automobile drivers, they can also be applied to operators of farm machinery. Read these tips, think about them and share them with family and employees.

- Abstain from talking on a cell phone while you are actively driving.
- If you need to answer a call or make one, try to pull off the road into a safe parking area.
- Make sure your phone is within easy reach, not somewhere you might have to dig for it.
- Use a hand's free device like a Bluetooth headset or earpiece that allows you to talk while both hands remain on the wheel.
- Hands-free or not, postpone conversations that are either emotional or complex.
- Prior to getting on the road, practice driving while using your hands-free device in an open parking lot so you know how to use it properly without fumbling.
- Do not send a text message or try to read incoming messages while driving.
- Use your cell phone only in the event of an emergency in which you need help or someone else needs help.

Practicing cell phone safety is everyone's responsibility. There are plenty of studies that show any distraction that interrupts a driver's concentration is potentially dangerous. Take your eyes off the road for a second and incidents can happen. Same thing goes for farm equipment operators.

Since 1943, the CFBF and State Fund partnership has provided farmers with affordable worker compensation coverage and accident prevention training for agricultural employers and their employees. For more information, call toll-free at (800) 773-7667, or check the SCIF Web site at www.scif.com.

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**Export Training Program For California
Farmers, Ranchers And Food Processors
Announced**

Application deadline March 26, 2009 –
Classes scheduled to begin in April

SACRAMENTO, March 5, 2009 – To assist California companies in expanding export sales, an international training program is being offered in several locations throughout the state. The California Centers for International Trade Development, in cooperation with the California Department of Food and Agriculture, is hosting a California Agricultural Export Training Certificate Program for agricultural companies. This training program is designed to meet the educational needs of agricultural companies seeking to export their products worldwide. Companies interested in registering for the program should visit www.citd.org/calag

“Ninety-six percent of the world’s consumers live outside of the United States,” said CDFA Secretary A.G. Kawamura, “Assisting California companies in providing safe, nutritious and high quality products to international markets furthers the economic development of our state.”

The California Agricultural Export Training Certificate Program is a series of six classes over three months that focuses on several aspects of exporting food and agricultural products. Class topics include how to get paid, international transportation, tariffs, trade barriers and finding foreign buyers. Classes are scheduled to begin in April and conclude in June, with a registration deadline of March 26, 2009. Training will be held in Oakland, Merced and Rancho Cucamonga.

The training program is funded by the California Centers for International Trade Development through the California Community College Economic Development Program and with an U.S. Department of Education Title VI B Grant.

In 2007, California exported \$10.9 billion in agricultural products to more than 150 countries setting a new record for the state. Leading export products included almonds, dairy and products, wine, table grapes and cotton. The top destinations for California agricultural products included Canada, the European Union, Japan, China/Hong Kong and Mexico. On average, California farmers and ranchers export 28 percent of the products that they produce.

For further information on the California Agricultural Export Training Certificate Program, please contact Mr. Frank Nunez, training coordinator at (888) 638-7888 or frank.nunez@scccd.edu

**RIVERSIDE COUNTY
AGRICULTURAL COMMISSIONER'S
OFFICE**



- * California Department of Food & Agriculture (CDFA) placed, and provides service for, a total of 1144 yellow panel traps for Asian Citrus Psyllid (ACP) in Riverside County.
 - 722 traps in the southwestern section.
 - 468 traps in the Coachella Valley.
 - Standard trap placement is 5 traps per square mile.

Trapping Tidbits!

- * Riverside County Agricultural Commissioner's Office (Riverside CAC) placed, and provides service for, yellow panel traps for ACP at all citrus packing houses within the county.



Alert

Cautionary

Proactive

- * Nurseries outside the ACP quarantine area may participate in a voluntary program in which ACP host material is treated and certified prior to entering the ACP quarantine area.
 - A foliar (cyfluthrin) and drench (imidacloprid) treatment is required.
 - Standard inspection and certification fees apply.
 - One nursery in Riverside County is currently participating.
- * For suspect ACP or citrus greening calls from residents or industry, Riverside CAC responds immediately! Action is taken the same day.
 - To date, all suspect ACP calls have been negative.
- * Riverside CAC inspects citrus and bins from ACP quarantine and surrounding areas.
- * ACP finds in Westmorland, Imperial County resulted in the quarantine boundaries being increased northward to the Riverside County line.
- * ACP hosts are treated with a foliar and drench treatment within 400 meters of find sites (CDFA/USDA).
- * No ACP finds to date in Riverside County.
- * Within California to date, all psyllid and ACP host samples have been negative for citrus greening (Huanglongbing or HLB).

**RIVERSIDE COUNTY AGRICULTURAL COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE
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.....CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE.

could have their own negative effect on the biology of citrus trees in regards to beneficial organisms.

Threat reaches California

Members of the Non-Profit Management Corporation for the California Citrus State Historic Park in Riverside recently received a presentation about the imminent threat of HLB. As of the September 2008 meeting, the disease had not yet been reported in California, although the insect had been trapped in three backyards in the border town, Tijuana. On September 16, the California Department of Food and Agriculture reported that the Asian citrus psyllid has been located at 12 San Diego County sites. Wherever the Asian citrus psyllid is, HLB will likely soon follow.

The State will vigorously attack the psyllid to defend California's \$1.1 billion citrus industry. Over the past three seasons, California's total citrus production has averaged 3.2 million tons per season, about 24 percent of the nation's total. California is the nation's main source (80 percent) of fresh-market oranges, and supplies 87 percent of the nation's lemons, according to the USDA Economic Research Service.

At this point, the defense approach will be to treat citrus and closely-related plants with the organic compound Pyganic, already widely used in organic citrus groves, and to drench the soil with Merit, an imidicloprid, a systemic product (and a common treatment for fleas on pets) that is applied underground rather than sprayed.

Spraying programs are the only strategy available now to slow the onset and spread of HLB. At best, these suppression techniques are believed to be a stopgap measure.

In Florida, the citrus industry is undertaking a collective effort to research and defeat HLB. Already, the spread of HLB is having significantly negative impacts on the Florida citrus industry. The costs of enhanced insect control, tree removal, and better nutrient management have gone up, and the loss of infected trees from productive groves and, in some cases, removal of entire groves due to disease are devastating large and small citrus businesses. The added costs of citrus greening alone have increased grove operations in Florida on average about 50 percent, from \$1,000 per acre per year to nearly \$1,500 per year.

The Florida citrus industry worries that the state's \$9.3 billion citrus industry and the ancillary businesses that rely on it and its 76,000 jobs are under threat from the insidious disease. If the tiny insect and its disease baggage make it to Riverside and San Bernardino counties, the impact on Redlands' struggling citrus industry could potentially trump any threat from development.

Redlands' growers cannot stand alone in the vigilant watch for the Asian citrus psyllid. Everyone who plants citrus, either as ornamental or functional landscaping, or the closely-related plant orange jasmine, must be on guard. The insect could be anywhere.

Identifying HLB and the psyllid

According to the University of California Kearney Agricultural Research Center, symptoms of the disease include yellowing of leaves, yellow shoots, and an asymmetrical yellow and green blotchy mottling of the leaves. The insect's feeding causes burned tips and twisting of the new leaves.

More importantly, the disease causes the tree to produce lopsided bitter, hard fruit with small dark aborted seeds. It makes the fruit inedible, thus unsaleable.

While it's important for individuals with either a full grove or just a couple of trees to be watchful, identifying the disease in the tree means it's too late. The time to make a stand is now, even before the insect arrives.

The California Department of Food and Agriculture warns people to not bring plants from any other state or country into California. The department also warns people to plant only disease-free certified citrus to avoid introducing any diseases.

In addition, anyone can train themselves to watch for evidence of psyllids. People should watch for sooty mold, waxy tubules, eggs and nymphs in new citrus flush, and the adults on yellow sticky traps. Still, identifying an eighth-inch-long insect poses a challenge.

Such vigilance, however, may be critical to preserving the Inland Empire's citrus groves.



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2009 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- * April 8th – RCFB Board meeting – 5:30 pm at the Farm House in Beaumont.
- * April 10th – the RCFB office will close at noon to observe Good Friday.

Renewal Reminder

If you are due to renew your membership, please take a moment to do so by calling Farm Bureau at (951) 684-6732 or renew on-line at www.cfbf.com

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