

Prune orchard management practices/conditions to consider this summer

- **Fertilizers.** Split fertilizer applications -- several small applications of potassium and/or nitrogen -- usually allow trees to absorb more fertilizer than one large “shot” of fertilizer. A heavy crop will use more potassium and nitrogen than a light crop. Put leaf sampling on your calendar for July.
- **Monitor soil moisture** to make sure your orchard has adequate water. Prunes should have adequate soil moisture from through June/early July to avoid end cracking. Tracking soil water also helps you avoid over irrigating when the weather has been cool. Weekly soil water use info is available at: http://cetehama.ucdavis.edu/Agriculture/Weekly_Soil_Moisture_Loss_Reports.htm
- **Rust.** It has been and continues to be a wet spring. Spring rain can = summer rust. Rust spots were found in several prune orchards in south Sutter area on May 14. Don't let prune rust defoliate your trees! Look for rust spots in the orchard at least once a week after May 1. If one or more rust spots are found on any leaf (see photos below) in an orchard, spray the block with a recommended material as soon as possible. Sulfur is a very effective material to prevent further spread of prune rust. Apply sulfur before any rain for best rust control.

If you use a synthetic fungicide to control rust, alternate fungicide groups to avoid/reduce the chances of fungicide resistance developing in the pest organism. We have a few good pesticide classes available to prune growers. See current information on fungicide efficacy & timing at: <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PDF/PMG/fungicideefficacytiming.pdf>.

What to look for when scouting for prune rust.
Angular, not round, prune rust spots on top and bottom of the same prune leaf.



- ❑ **Spider mites.** Scout for [spider mites](#) beginning in June. Don't let spider mites sneak up on you. See info on the web at: <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/r606400411.html>.
- ❑ **Trunk sunburn.** Protect the future of your orchard by painting the trunks of replants and young trees WHITE. When painting trunks, use indoor water-based latex (not oil-based) paint. If trunk shields (nursery boxes) are used on young trees, the trunk should also be painted to avoid "box burn" around the top of the box. Box burn can girdle the tree trunk just below the top of the box. If nursery boxes are used without painting trees, the boxes should be flattened (to look like ◊ this from the top, not this ☒) to reduce risk of "box burn".
- ❑ **Late harvest in 2010?** Reference date was about a week later than last year. Could we be looking at a later-than-normal harvest this year? It's something to think about...

Prune Rootstock Trial Location Needed!

The University of California, with funding from the California Dried Plum Board, is planning two large (3 acres) prune rootstock trials in the Sacramento Valley beginning in spring, 2011. We have found a site north of Chico, but need a Sutter/Yuba site. This site would preferably be on heavy ground in an area where high winds can be a problem. We are looking for a rootstock that can handle high winds without being short pruned early in the life of the orchard. If you are planning to plant a 'French' prune block in 2011, and would be willing to let UC buy 3 acres of trees in exchange for some extra time at pruning and harvest, please give me a call at (530) 218-2359.

Prune orchard updates on Twitter

I am now sending out twitter updates on Sutter/Yuba region prune orchard topics via Twitter. These are short (140 characters, max) messages sent via the web, e-mail and text messaging at the rate of about 3-5/week. Topics include predicted weather, pest information, and general, timely comments on prune growing. This is a way that I can get current information to prune growers and PCAs in a hurry.

There are several ways you get these updates:

- Log onto the web at <http://twitter.com/prunedoc>.
- Set up an RSS feed to notify your computer or smart phone when I post a message. Go to <http://twitter.com/prunedoc>, and click on "RSS feed of prunedoc's tweets". Consider using a RSS reader such as Google Reader (www.google.com/reader) or Newsgator (www.newsgator.com). These sites compile all blogs and tweets you "follow" so you can read them all at one location. David Doll, UC Farm Advisor in Merced County, has a great almond blog/tweet set up at www.thealmonddoctor.com. If you are following me, David, and say, the Almond Board of California (<http://twitter.com/almondboard>), you can see all updates at one site using an RSS reader.
- Get updates via text message by texting "follow prunedoc" to 40404. If your cell phone package doesn't include unlimited texting, this option may cost you money with each text.

Much to do about nothing, all this "tweeting" business? Maybe. It could also be another way to get quick updates in an easy format (web, e-mail or text). How long could it take to read a 140 character text?

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