



The Citrus Quarantine Applies to Homeowners, Too

by Dorothy Downing, UC Master Gardener

Recently, all of Tulare County was placed under quarantine by The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) because the Asian Citrus Psyllid has been found here. For the citrus industry, the quarantine means that before any citrus fruit is moved out of the quarantine area, it is required to be cleaned of leaves and stems and/or treated in a prescribed manner to eliminate the Asian Citrus Psyllid (ACP).

This quarantine applies to homeowners, too. In a news release from September 26, 2014, the CDFA stated that "...residents with backyard citrus trees are asked to not remove fruit from the quarantine area." Therefore, if family and friends from outside of Tulare County come to visit for the holidays, do not send them home with sacks of citrus fruit such as: oranges, grapefruit, lemons, limes—or any other variety of citrus. This also means that you cannot ship cartons of your own backyard citrus to relatives outside of Tulare County.

This quarantine is required because the rapidly spreading Asian Citrus Psyllid is an invasive pest that can carry Huanglongbing (HLB) disease, also known as greening disease. This disease has wiped out the citrus industry in Florida and as a result, many thousands of trees died. California regulators are working hard to prevent that from happening here. All citrus and closely related species are susceptible hosts for both the insect and the disease. The disease causes the leaves of the infected tree to turn yellow. Common nutrient deficiency also causes leaves to turn yellow, but the yellow splotches caused by nutrient deficiency look the same on the right and left sides of the leaves. HLB, however, causes yellow blotching that is not the same on each side of the leaf. As the infection grows, the tree will produce small, bitter fruit and there will be excessive fruit drop. Eventually, the tree will stop producing fruit and die.

The Asian Citrus Psyllid is a tiny insect, about the size of an aphid. It is difficult to see without a magnifying glass. The wings are brown and have a clear area in the middle. It feeds with its rear end tilted up and can look like a thorn. The tilted body and wing pattern are unique to this pest. Juveniles called nymphs are found on new leaf growth or young stems in the spring. They have yellow-brown flattened bodies, red eyes, dark antennae and produce white waxy tubules which are distinctive to this pest.



Asian citrus psyllid nymphs and adult (inset) on citrus shoot. Photo by M. Lewis, UC Riverside



Asian citrus psyllid adult



Blotchy yellow HLB-infected leaves

According to Dr. Beth Grafton-Cardwell, a University of California entomology specialist from the Lindcove Research and Extension Center, the "...psyllid damages the tree directly through its feeding activities. New shoot growth that is heavily infested by psyllids does not expand and develop normally and is more susceptible to breaking off the tree. There is greater concern over the fact that the psyllid is an efficient vector of the bacterium that causes the economically devastating disease called citrus greening or 'Huanglongbing' (pronounced *wong long bing*). Psyllids carrying the disease bacterium infect the tree when they feed. The diseased tree will decline in health until it dies. HLB has been detected just once in California – and that was last year on a single residential property in Hacienda Heights, Los Angeles County."



Citrus trees dying from Huanglongbing disease

Currently, the only way to control the bacterial disease is to control the pest that vectors it. There is no cure once the psyllid has infected the tree with HLB. So far, the psyllid has been found in 10 different areas of Tulare County, but there has been no evidence of any trees with disease at this time. While HLB disease has only been found in one tree to date in Los Angeles County, it is likely to begin spreading soon if precautions are not taken now. Homeowners can help by looking for the psyllid and helping to control it, and by reporting trees they suspect have the HLB disease.

For more information on how to reduce the chances of the Asian Citrus Psyllid infesting the areas around your home, visit this website:

http://ucanr.edu/sites/ACP/Homeowner_Options/Homeowner_Management/Monitoring/. The video: "Detecting Asian Citrus Psyllid" on YouTube is also a good source of information: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QhQXL4bwnXI&feature=youtu.be>

Additionally, feel free to call the Master Gardeners at the Tulare Office (684-3325) or the Kings County Office (852-2736) for more information about the pest or the disease. If you think you see an ACP, call the Tulare County Ag Commissioner at 684-3350, or the CDFA hotline at: 1-800-491-1899.

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