

Asian Citrus Psyllid and Huanglongbing Disease

The Asian citrus psyllid and the deadly Huanglongbing (HLB) disease that it spreads threaten citrus trees in backyards and on farms. The psyllid arrived in Southern California in 2008, and the HLB disease was first detected in Los Angeles in 2012. All types of citrus—including oranges, grapefruit, lemons, and mandarins—are affected as well as a few closely related ornamentals.

What is the concern?

- ◆ HLB disease will kill trees in as little as five years.
- ◆ There is no cure or effective control method for HLB.
- ◆ HLB disease is caused by a bacterium carried from tree to tree by the Asian citrus psyllid.
- ◆ Reducing the psyllid population helps to slow the spread of the disease.
- ◆ Although the psyllid can damage leaves, it doesn't kill trees by itself, and fruit is safe to eat.

Inspect your citrus trees for psyllids.

- ◆ From spring through fall, look for psyllid eggs, nymphs, and adults on newly forming leaves.
- ◆ Adults are about the size of an aphid with brownish mottled wings. They feed with their heads down and their “tails” in the air.
- ◆ Nymphs are tiny and yellowish, and they excrete white waxy tubules.
- ◆ Psyllids feed on plant sap and produce sticky honeydew that may be covered with black sooty mold. However, other citrus pests (e.g. aphids, soft scales) may cause this symptom, too.

What are the symptoms of HLB disease?

- ◆ Leaves show an asymmetrical yellow mottling with patches of green.
- ◆ Fruit is small, lopsided, and falls off the tree easily, while the juice tastes bitter.

What should you do if you think you have the Asian citrus psyllid or HLB?

- ◆ Call the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Exotic Pest Hotline at 1-800-491-1899 to confirm a find.
- ◆ Don't move plants or clippings out of psyllid-infested areas, because they can spread the insect and disease.



What about insecticides?

- ◆ If you live where the psyllid hasn't become established, CDFA personnel will come apply insecticides and manage the pest for you. They will also test to see if the psyllids are carrying the disease.
- ◆ In areas where the Asian citrus psyllid is well established, CDFA is asking residents to help reduce psyllid numbers by treating their own infested trees.
- ◆ There are no treatments for HLB disease. Diseased trees must be removed to protect any citrus trees around them from becoming infected.
- ◆ Treat only when Asian citrus psyllids are present, because insecticides can harm bees and natural enemies needed for other pests.
- ◆ Don't apply insecticides when trees are flowering because of toxicity to bees.
- ◆ The systemic insecticide imidacloprid provides the best control of nymphs infesting young leaves. It is taken up through roots and retained in trees for up to six months. It should be applied only once a year.
- ◆ If a carbaryl spray is used, be sure it makes direct contact with adults and nymphs hidden within new growth.

See Pest Notes: *Asian Citrus Psyllid and Huanglongbing Disease* at www.ipm.ucdavis.edu for more details.



Brownish adult, yellow nymphs, and white wax of Asian citrus psyllids (left). Symptoms of HLB on leaves and fruit (right).

Minimize the use of pesticides that pollute our waterways. Use nonchemical alternatives or less toxic pesticide products whenever possible. Read product labels carefully and follow instructions on proper use, storage, and disposal.

For more information about managing pests, contact your **University of California Cooperative Extension office** listed under the county government pages of your phone book or visit the UC IPM Web site at www.ipm.ucdavis.edu.

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