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Madera County UC Cooperative Extension names new advisor

University of California post-doctoral scientist [Brent Holtz](#) has been named the [UC Cooperative Extension](#) advisor for pomology, water and soils in Madera County. He assumes his new role Nov. 1.

“We have 65,000 acres of nuts and fruit crops. Brent will begin developing an education program with an emphasis on almonds and pistachios,” said Ron Vargas, UCCE director in Madera County.

UC Cooperative Extension is the outreach and research arm of the University of California system. Campus-based specialists and county-based farm, home and youth advisors deliver practical, unbiased, science-based solutions to California.

A San Joaquin Valley native and fifth-generation farmer, Holtz earned a bachelor’s degree in biology from California State Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo, in 1986; a master’s degree in plant pathology from UC Berkeley in 1989; and a Ph.D. in plant pathology at UC Berkeley in 1993.

Since June 1993, Holtz has conducted post-doctoral research at the [UC Kearney Agricultural Research and Extension Center](#) in Parlier, where he has studied the ecology and epidemiology of a fungus that causes brown rot in stone fruit.

Holtz’ research resulted in a new recommendation to the many stone fruit farmers who, as a matter of routine each winter, knock old fruit off tree branches onto the orchard floor.

“That’s exactly what the fungus wants, to be knocked to the ground,” Holtz said.

He suggests that old fruit be picked from the trees and removed from the orchards in October and November to reduce the loss of the next year’s fruit to brown rot.

Holtz’ doctoral dissertation, which focused on a soil-borne cotton plant disease called black root rot, prepared him for his role as a soil and water advisor, he said.

“Since the fungus lives in the soil, the work gave me a lot of experience with soil studies,” Holtz said.

Beginning Nov. 1, Holtz may be reached at (209) 675-7879, baholtz@ucanr.edu.