

**Keith Backman – CA-ASA Honoree  
Pomologist, Certified Crop Advisor  
Dellavalle Laboratory  
*Presented by Nat Dellavalle***

It is an honor to introduce Keith Backman, the 2021 California Chapter of the American Society of Agronomy honoree. Keith was raised on a Sutter County 40 acre orchard where he became familiar with peaches, walnuts and almonds. He and three brothers saved for college by raising and selling tomatoes from their roadside stand. He graduated from Yuba City High and Yuba Community College where he majored in science. Keith received bachelors and master's degrees from UC Davis where he majored in pomology.



About the time Keith received his masters he applied to Dellavalle Laboratory where a pomologist was needed. We had just signed a contract with a farm management company serving several thousand acres of tree fruit. The farm management company went bankrupt before Keith reported to work. Well we had a lot of Acala cotton under contract. Those of you who remember Acala know that it could be tall, very tall. We reasoned that if you reached up to get a petiole that it was a tree. Keith adapted showing his flexibility. Before long he added many acres of stone fruit, almonds and walnuts to be served. Clients asked questions for which there were no answers in the literature. At the time established interpretative tissue concentrations were for samples collected in midsummer. Clients wanted to know how much nitrogen to apply in the spring. Keith collected a series of spring time samples and developed a system relating spring time leaf samples to nitrogen status. He answered the client's question, accurately predicted nitrogen requirements and added to our tool basket. It was decades later that university scientist conducted research on the method. He made similar advances with irrigation management of tree crops. Keith continues his innovative way of solving problems and answering questions.

Keith Backman has been a frequent presenter at the annual meeting of the California Chapter of the American Society of Agronomy and other events. Speaking engagements have included Western Nutrient Management Conferences, California Fertilizer Conferences, FREP conferences, CCA Classes and others. Keith has frequently been a guest lecture at university nutrient management and community college classes. He shares his talent and skill freely.

Keith served as secretary for the California CCA Board for about 10 years. He also served on the International Exam committee for the Certified Crop Advisor Program. Most recently he assisted the Western Plant Health Association Soil Improvement Committee with the upcoming edition of the Western Fertilizer Handbook where he was the key author of the new Nutrient Management and Irrigation Management chapters. In addition, he served as a Scoutmaster and district leader in Boy Scouts for over 20 years.

Keith and his wife, Gail split their time between their homes in Hanford and Santa Cruz and visiting grandchildren in Iowa. They have two children and 2 grandchildren. Their son, Dr Nathan Backman PhD lives in Storm Lake, Iowa where he teaches Computer Science at Buena Vista University. Their daughter, Hope, also lives in Storm Lake, Iowa, where she teaches Kindergarten.

For me Keith Backman has been a valued colleague from whom I have learned much. He has served on the Board of Directors of Dellavalle laboratory from the firm's inception. In semi-retirement he continues to serve as Technical Consultant Manager passing his wealth of knowledge and skill to younger colleagues. It is indeed a pleasure to introduce Keith Backman as a 2021 California chapter honoree.