

Sacramento Valley Prune Newsletter

August 2026



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Upcoming UC Extension Events

Event	Date	Location	Contact
TTTF: Labor economics	Aug 20	Orland	Domena Agyeman
TTTF: IPM Review 2026	Nov 19	Yuba City	Sudan Gyawaly
Prune Research Conference	Dec 15+16	TBD	Jaime Ott
TTTF: Prune Dormancy	TBD	TBD	Franz Niederholzer

Prune Orchard Considerations, Harvest 2026

Franz Niederholzer, UCCE Farm Advisor, Colusa and Sutter/Yuba Counties

Harvest is underway throughout the Sacramento Valley. There is no more critical time for crop quality, crop value and grower income. The goal is the same every year: put large, sound (undamaged) and sweet fruit in the bin. Here's a quick review of some suggested practices. Growers must make decisions for their own operations based on experience, local conditions, and input from advisors (PCA, CCA, and processor field reps). Check with your processor regarding pesticide selection.

Irrigation: Irrigate as soon as possible following harvest to help the orchard be ready for a productive 2027. Target stem water potential is -12 to -16 bars, roughly 3 to 4 bars below baseline for days with high temperatures from 90-100 deg F and 20-30% RH.

Nutrition: Check July leaf sample values to evaluate the 2026 nutritional program for individual orchards (see article in this newsletter on this topic). Key nutrients in the fall are potassium and zinc. Additional nutrients may be important in individual orchards. Check with your CCA about rates and material.

Fruit brown rot: Even though harvest is underway, this topic is included on the outside chance that a rain event is forecast before harvest finishes. Talk with your PCA regarding fruit brown rot risk this year. See the article in this newsletter for fruit brown rot management considerations. Check with your processor regarding allowed fungicides at this time of year and with your PCA regarding the use (rate, PHI, etc.) of allowed materials.

Postharvest cleanup: As soon as possible after harvest, check irrigation lines for leaks/punctures and tree trunks for shaker damage. Flag or otherwise note the location of trunk damage so bark cleanup can be done in the dormant season when insects that spread *Ceratocystis* canker are less active.

Harvest: Fruit is mature when internal pressure drops below four pounds. Harvesting too early (above 4 pounds pressure) can mean delivering immature fruit at low sugar levels to the dryer; resulting in poorer fruit quality and reduced grower net returns (smaller dry fruit size and increased drying costs). Usually, when average fruit pressures are at 3 pounds, all or most of the fruit on the tree are mature and will produce a high-quality dried fruit. Though brix will increase after this point, it is due to the fruit losing moisture, not gaining more sugar.

Lastly, reconsider your sizing chain opening as harvest progresses, especially if using a larger (1.0-1.25") sizing chain. Later harvesting fruit should be softer and have a higher sugar content than at the start of harvest, so the sizing chain may be dropping larger sized dried fruit in later harvest.

Fruit Brown Rot

Franz Niederholzer, UCCE Farm Advisor, Colusa and Sutter/Yuba Counties

Fruit brown rot infection results in off-grade fruit and, in worst cases, may result in a sub-standard grade for the entire crop. The most effective programs for fruit brown rot control in UC research include effective fungicide selection (include a FRAC 3 fungicide at a labeled rate), higher spray volume (for example, 130-150 gallons per acre compared to 75-100 gallons per acre) for better spray coverage throughout the tree and including light summer (415) oil or an adjuvant such as Nufilm-P in the spray tank to improve spray deposition on the fruit.

For best control, fungicides must be applied ahead of major infection event (for example, rain or extended high humidity producing long, overnight dew events). Fruit brown rot can be very difficult to control, so growers should not expect miracle control under high-risk conditions of damaged, clustered fruit, and/or high levels of moisture in the orchard (rain or dew). Consult with your PCA and processor regarding fruit brown rot infection risk and, if a spray is needed, proper materials, preharvest intervals, rates, and timing.

Hot humid summer and wet winter ahead?

Franz Niederholzer, UCCE Farm Advisor, Colusa and Sutter/Yuba Counties

When planning orchard operations for this fall and winter, consider including options for a warm fall and/or a very wet winter.

The forecast increasingly calls for unusual fall and winter weather ahead. On June 11, 2026, the National Weather Service (NWS) issued an El Niño Advisory, warning there is currently a “63% chance of a very strong El Niño from November to January”. On July 9, the NWS forecast a “81% chance of a very strong El Niño from October-December”. What could this mean for the Sacramento Valley? In the winters of 1982-83 and 1997-98, strong El Niño weather events contributed to very high annual rainfall totals and flooding in the Sacramento Valley. Considering these past El Niño events and the strong El Niño forecast, weather the rest of the year and into 2027 could include above-average summer and fall temperatures and a significant increase in winter rains.

For more information on the current El Niño forecast, check out Dr. Daniel Swain’s Weather West blog. Dr. Swain is a climate scientist with UC ANR and the National Science Foundation’s National Center for Atmospheric Research.

July leaf sampling critical values

Jaime Ott, UCCE Tehama, Shasta, Glenn, Butte Counties

July leaf samples are our best tool for understanding the nutrient status of our trees. While nutrient levels in leaves change rapidly earlier in the season, by July they have stabilized and can provide us with useful information about how well our fertility program this year matched our trees' nutrient needs.

Critical values for July leaf samples are shown in Table 1. Keep the results with your fertilizer application and yield records to better evaluate and estimate future fertilization needs. See [“July Leaf Sampling: A Critical Task in Prune Production”](#) by Luke Milliron for detailed information about how to take and interpret July leaf samples.

Table 1. Critical nutrient levels for prune leaves sampled in July (fully expanded leaves from nonbearing spurs).

Nutrient	Deficient when under	Adequate	Excessive when over
Nitrogen (N)	2.2%	2.3-2.8%	2.8-3.0%
Phosphorous (P)	0.1%	0.1-0.3%	not established
Potassium (K)	1.0%	1.3-2.0%	2.0%
Calcium (Ca)	1.0%	over 1.0%	not established
Zinc (Zn)	18 ppm	over 18ppm	not established
Manganese (Mn)	20 ppm	over 20 ppm	not established
Copper (Cu)	4 ppm	over 4 ppm	not established
Magnesium (Mg)	0.25%	over 0.25%	not established
Sodium (Na)	concerned only with toxicity	concerned only with toxicity	0.2%
Chlorine (Cl)	concerned only with toxicity	concerned only with toxicity	0.3%
Boron (B)	25 ppm	25-80 ppm	100 ppm