

August 2017

Pistachio Short Course Coming to Visalia. Hold November 14-16, 2017, for the next Advances in Pistachio Production Short Course!

This course is designed for orchard decision makers, and covers the basic science, not as experimental data, but as accepted science that supports current and developing production practices including regional differences. Please check back for updates at (<http://ucanr.edu/sites/PistachioShortCourse/>) or feel free to contact [UC ANR Program Support Unit](#) with questions.

Kern County Harvest Timing, Yield and etc.

Pistachio harvest across all varieties will be delayed about a week compared to last year. This delay is related to our long cool spring, which is a distant memory in light of the long hot summer we have experienced. The Golden Hills and Lost Hill harvest appears to be commencing the week of August 28, and, usually, Kerman, if not winter oiled, follows 10 days to 2 weeks later. Even though 2017 is an “off” bearing year, many Kerman blocks have a good crop on them. As usual, there is a lot of variability from block to block on the Kerman trees as to percentage of filled nuts, versus non-splits, versus blanks. On an off-bearing year, we generally expect to see more blank nuts. The long, hot summer is, also, producing a lot of sunburned nuts as the heavily-laden branches sag out toward the row middles.

For reasons still not clear, but probably related to the many, very hot days, both male and female trees experienced “scorch” this summer. Scorch is the drying of portions of leaves, entire leaves and the loss of leaves from branches. The branches remain alive and green. The male trees were hit the hardest, but a large number of female trees demonstrated scorch as well. Scorch is not a disease, but any senescent tissue becomes an easy target for a pathogen such as *Alternaria* species. In Kern County, no chemical treatments appeared necessary for scorch.

Notes on planting Gumdrop

The female cultivar “Gumdrop” was released to the industry in 2016. As we continue to grow Gumdrop in test trials, we continue to learn more about it. Remember that the main reason for planting Gumdrop is to achieve an earlier harvest. If an earlier harvest is not the primary goal, consider planting something else.

Over the past few seasons, we have learned that budding small diameter rootstocks with Gumdrop buds is challenging. Gumdrop produces large-diameter branches quickly, and finding branches less than ½ inch in diameter for budwood, is difficult.

Gumdrop grows into big trees significantly more quickly than Golden Hills or Kerman. Data taken in 2016 showed a mean circumference of the scion 4 inches above the graft union to be 24.8 inches for Gumdrop, versus 18.9 and 19.3 for Kerman and Golden Hills, respectively, on UCB-1 seedling rootstock.

The mean rootstock diameter for Gumdrop was 21.4 inches, versus 20.3 and 19.3 for Kerman and Golden Hills, respectively. The growth since 2016 reinforces the observation that Gumdrop wants to be a big tree. The vigorous and thick-diameter branch growth suggests that this cultivar will have to be pruned more vigorously, than Golden Hills or Kerman, with earlier use of mechanical topping and hedging. A faster growing tree may not be an advantage, and the observation that it grows more quickly than other cultivars suggests that a 20 ft. x 20 ft. spacing may be more appropriate for this cultivar than closer spacing. Probably because of its vigorous growth habit, Gumdrop appears to more susceptible to inherent variabilities in UCB-1 rootstock. A Gumdrop orchard will likely be much more uniform if grown on clonal rootstock. Obviously, with some of the difficulties the industry has had of late with clonal rootstocks produced by some suppliers, purchasing a large clonal tree, preferably grafted in the nursery, will take some of the current uncertainty out of planting a clonal block.

Gumdrop continues to demonstrate an early harvest, reaching maturity about 10 days before Golden Hills and about 24 days before Kerman. Gumdrop, also, continues to live up its name in that it produces more gum on the hull than does Kerman or Golden Hills which leads to a stickier harvest. Gumdrop produces more early splits than does Golden Hills or Kerman, and is more like Lost Hills in this regard. Perhaps as a result of the gum drop or the early splits when summer temperatures are near their maximums, Gumdrop nuts do not hold well on the tree once mature, and harvesting this cultivar in a timely manner is mandatory. Gumdrop will perform best on well-drained, lighter soils with good water infiltration. It is not a good choice for areas receiving fall rainfall or subject to high humidity.

There exists a high probability, that, initially, there will not be a processor open when Gumdrop is ready for harvest. For example, this year, Gumdrop was ready for harvest on August 18, and I do not believe that most processors were open for business until the week of August 28.

Flowering and nut-production of Gumdrop appeared to be less adversely effected than other cultivars by the crop years of 2014 and 2015 when pistachios, in general, received inadequate winter “rest” or “dormancy” periods during the preceding fall and winter. The male cultivars recommended for Gumdrop are “Tejon” and “Zarand”. Zarand is suggested for inclusion in the orchard for years were the fall and winter rest period is inadequate and when Tejon may bloom somewhat later than Gumdrop. For those interested in planting Gumdrop and its male pollinizers and have questions, give me a call at 661-868-6221.

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