

Silverleaf Disease Management

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Silverleaf disease is of relatively minor importance in California. However, those growers who have had serious problems with it may not agree that it is a minor disease. Silverleaf is a fungal disease that is spread during the rainy season. When spores of the fungus are released from infected trees and land on fresh pruning wounds, the fungus slowly invades the tree and eventually kills it. Toxins produced by the fungus cause leaves on infected limbs to have a slight silvery appearance.

There is no cure for an infected tree. Disease management should be directed at prevention. This includes removing and burning diseased trees (including roots) and preventing infection of new trees. One method of prevention is to prune almonds and peaches before the rains come. I know this is difficult to do in bearing orchards, but young trees can be pruned now. Tradition tells us young trees growing in bacterial canker sites should be pruned late (during or after bloom). However, if bacterial canker is not an issue, there is no reason to prune late.

For those few growers in our area who are having problems with this disease, there may be some help soon. New research by Dr. Jim Adaskaveg has shown that a foliar application of *Trichoderma* spp. (a biological control fungus) was very effective in preventing infection of pruning wounds and was much better than any "traditional" fungicide tested. Commercial formulations of *Trichoderma* are available from ag supply dealers, but are not yet registered for use on almonds and stonefruit in California.