



SEP-OCT 2026

almond facts

NEWS, VIEWS, AND INDUSTRY INSIGHT

Early Insights into the 2026 Harvest

Kai on Stronger
Returns and a
Bolder Future

The Session
Ends. The
Work Ahead
Begins

Co-op
Principles:
Choice, Voice
and Control

Dancing in
the Kitchen
with Julianne
Hough



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ON THE COVER:

The 2026 harvest is wrapping up and the crop is making its way out of the orchards. Photo credit: Mel Machado



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Blue Diamond, the world's largest processor and marketer of almonds, exports to over 100 countries.

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Kai Bockmann
President & CEO



I can hardly believe harvest is ending and how much we've accomplished since last September. Our results this year are an important milestone for our cooperative; they reflect all the work that has happened over the last several years to strengthen Blue Diamond and position us for long-term success.

We've always been in it for the long haul, and our mission at *Blue Diamond* has always been to maximize returns to our grower-owners who entrust us with their almonds. As the world's largest almond handler and marketer, with businesses ranging across retail, ingredients, and commodities, we are uniquely positioned to capture value across the entire almond value chain. *Blue Diamond* has consistently delivered returns that exceed industry averages over the long term.

This year reflects the transformational efforts we've taken on behalf of our growers. Many of those actions stem from difficult decisions that we knew would strengthen the cooperative over time. The closure of our Sacramento manufacturing facility was one of them and, while never easy, it was the right decision for our growers. Since then, we have consolidated operations into our Salida and Turlock facilities while expanding our co-manufacturing partnerships. We're already realizing meaningful savings, and those benefits are expected to continue well into the future. At the same time, there are still opportunities ahead to enhance efficiencies and drive even stronger returns over time.

These efforts are contributing to a stronger financial position for *Blue Diamond*. Our balance sheet is incredibly strong, and our risk position has been dramatically reduced, enhanced by the consolidation of our operations. These are the results we're working to create for growers every day, and the chart on the next page shows the final return for the 2025 crop.

Beyond payments, I'm excited about the momentum we're building across our business. The *Blue Diamond* brand remains one of the most valuable assets in our industry, now valued at more than \$1 billion and maintaining leadership positions in both Almondmilk and Snack Almonds. *Almond Breeze*® continues to perform well at retail, and the launch of *Blue Diamond* Almondmilk has introduced our brand to new consumers and expanded our reach in the marketplace.

We also launched our first brand refresh in more than 20 years. The updated look honors *Blue Diamond*'s history while ensuring our brand remains relevant, recognizable, and competitive in a rapidly changing marketplace. However, this investment is more than a new look. It's about strengthening one of our cooperative's most valuable assets, and positioning the *Blue Diamond* brand to drive growth and value for growers for years to come. Combined with our continued investments in innovation and marketing, these efforts position our brands for sustainable growth in the years ahead.

We know that production costs continue to rise and growers continue to face challenges as rising fertilizer, energy, labor and pest management costs put ongoing pressure on profitability across the industry. It's why the work we're doing today matters so much. Every decision we make is focused on strengthening the cooperative and supporting the families who depend on it.

Blue Diamond Growers

2025 Crop Full Year Payment Rate

Varieties	Rates					
	Overall Average	Average of High Quality	Maximum Possible	Patronage Dividend	Revolving Reserve	Final Cash Payment
Nonpareil/Sonora Inshell	\$2.89	\$2.93	\$2.97	\$0.69	-\$0.08	\$0.61
Nonpareil/Sonora/Supareil Meats	\$2.84	\$2.88	\$2.95	\$0.83	-\$0.08	\$0.74
Independence Inshell	\$2.62	\$2.64	\$2.67	\$0.65	-\$0.07	\$0.57
Independence Meats	\$2.59	\$2.64	\$2.67	\$0.69	-\$0.07	\$0.61
Carmel/Winters Meats	\$2.62	\$2.67	\$2.72	\$0.74	-\$0.08	\$0.66
Monterey/Neplus Meats	\$2.60	\$2.66	\$2.72	\$0.74	-\$0.08	\$0.66
Calif/Price/Fritz/Wood Colony Meats	\$2.59	\$2.63	\$2.67	\$0.69	-\$0.07	\$0.61
Butte/Padre Meats	\$2.69	\$2.72	\$2.76	\$0.78	-\$0.08	\$0.70
Mission Meats	\$2.41	\$2.46	\$2.49	\$0.61	-\$0.07	\$0.54
Mixed Meats	\$2.12	\$2.12	\$2.26	\$0.48	-\$0.07	\$0.42
Above rates INCLUDE Volume Premiums and OSIP Incentive Bonus, but do not include the benefits of IC-DISC or DPAD.						
Total Average Return	\$2.71	\$2.77	\$2.81	\$0.74	-\$0.08	\$0.66

Almond farming has never been easy, but ultimately, we are stronger together. For more than a century, *Blue Diamond* has delivered for growers, and we are determined to continue strengthening returns for generations to come. Our cooperative is stronger than ever, our products and brands are well loved, and our people have never been more up for the challenge. *Blue Diamond* is well positioned for the future, and I remain incredibly grateful for the opportunity to lead this cooperative alongside our incredible teams who make its success possible. ♦



Kai Bockmann
President & CEO

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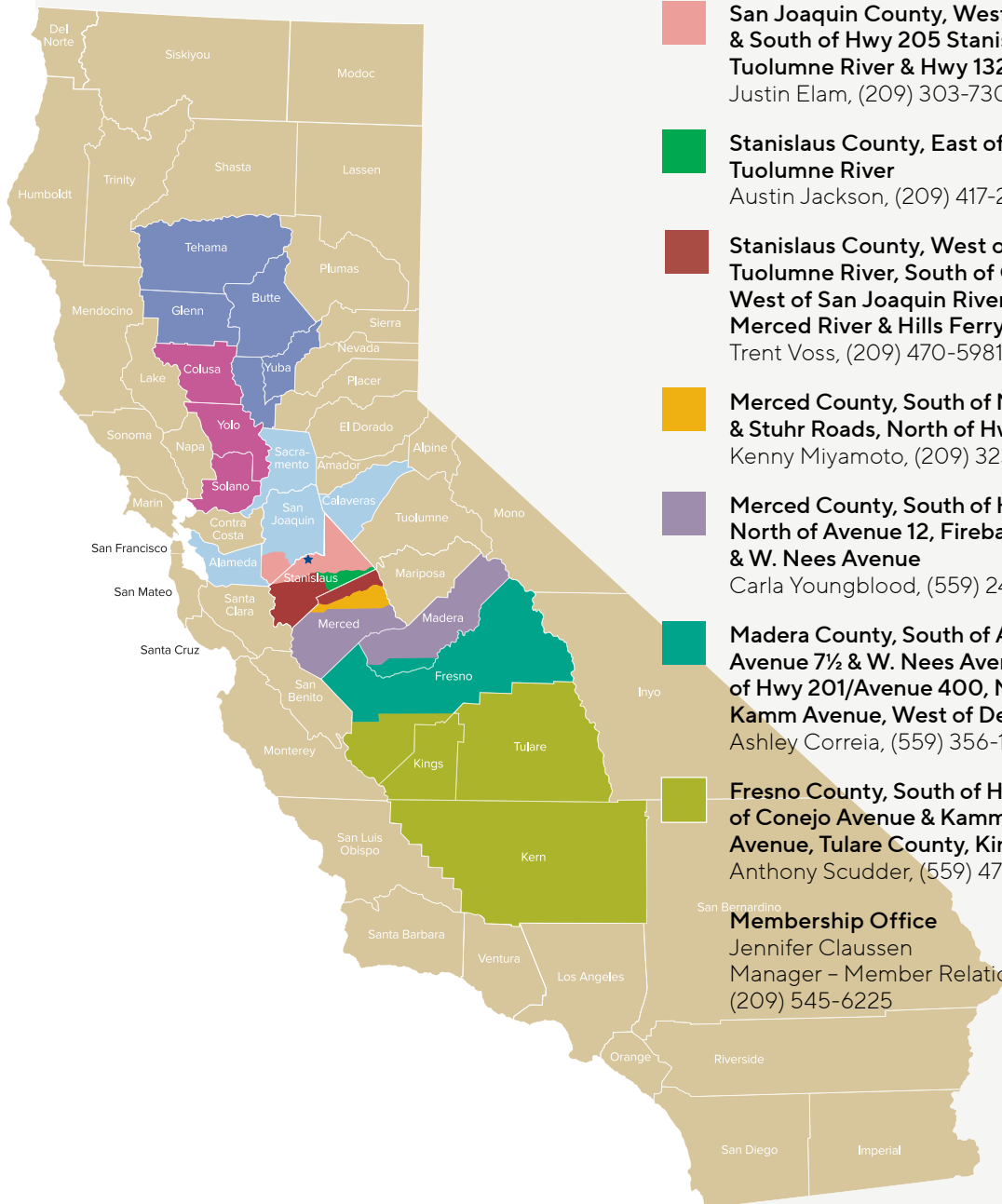


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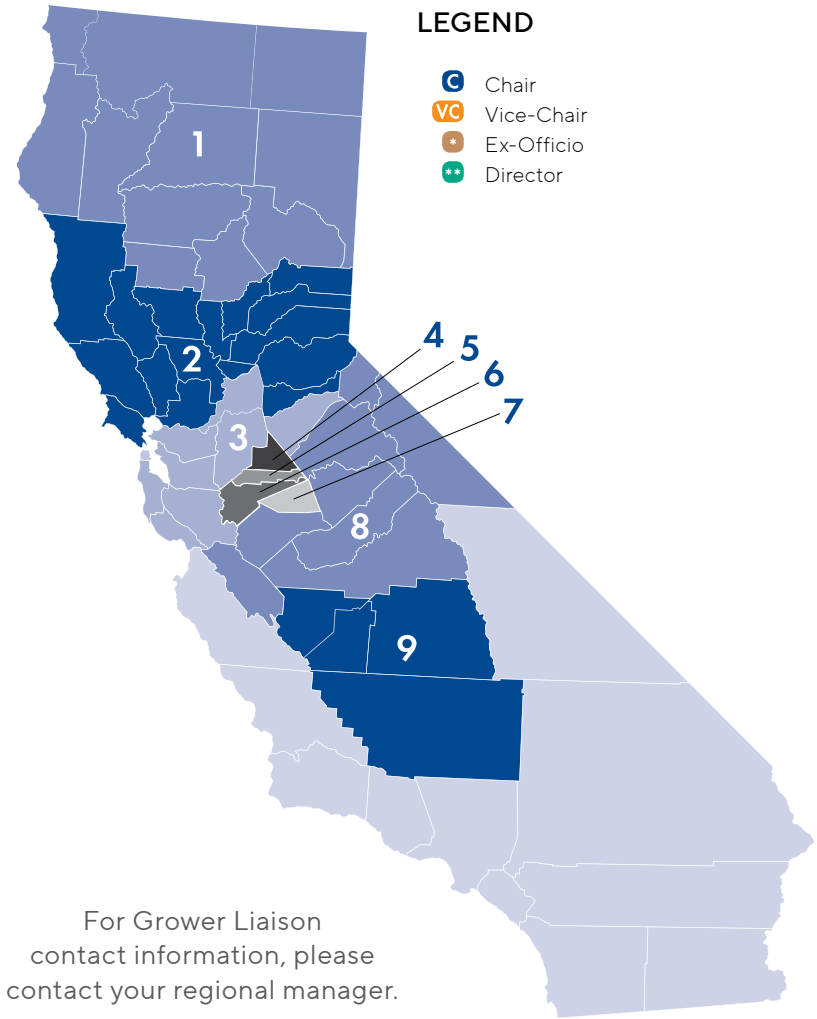
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Harvesting Choice, Voice and Control

*Last issue, we began harvesting the Cooperative Principles through the eyes of Blue Diamond grower-owners. If you missed it, you have some homework to do. I also left you with a promise: we would return to **Principle 1: Voluntary and Open Membership**. Here we are.*

A dairy farmer who served on the board of his marketing cooperative once asked me whether his co-op was really following Principle 1. At the time, his cooperative was not accepting new members because it simply did not have capacity for more milk. How, he asked, could membership be called “open” if the door was temporarily closed?

It is a fair question — one I get often — and a reminder, even to me, that the Cooperative Principles are guidelines for operating real businesses, not rigid rules to be interpreted literally. “Open” does not mean a cooperative must accept members it cannot responsibly serve. And “voluntary” does not mean membership comes without obligations.

That brings us to *Blue Diamond*. Growers voluntarily choose cooperative membership, but that choice comes with commitment. At first, that can sound contradictory. But a marketing cooperative cannot build processing capacity, develop markets, make customer commitments, or plan for the future if its supply is entirely unpredictable. The commitment is part of what makes collective marketing possible. Principle 1 is about the freedom to choose membership while accepting the responsibilities that come with that choice.

Which leads naturally to **Principle 2: Democratic Member Control**.

Once growers commit their crop, capital, and trust to a cooperative, who directs it? In a cooperative, the answer ultimately comes back to the members. *Blue Diamond* grower-owners elect directors from among the membership to represent them in governing the cooperative, alongside at-large directors who carry the same responsibilities inside the boardroom.

But Principle 2 is about more than voting. We commonly say that a cooperative is an extension of its members’ farms. *Blue Diamond* is an extension of its grower-owners and their orchards, reaching beyond their farm gate into processing, products, markets and customers. Grower-directors govern that extension, making consequential decisions about strategy, risk and the long-term economic position of members. Voting for directors is therefore much more than a cooperative tradition. It is one of the primary ways you exercise your control over an enterprise tasked with carrying your collective interests far beyond your orchards.

And if *Blue Diamond* is an extension of its grower-owners, then **Principle 4: Autonomy and Independence** asks an important question: *Who ultimately controls that extension?*

Principle 4 sounds abstract, but its purpose is quite practical. No successful cooperative operates in isolation. *Blue Diamond* works with customers, financial institutions, regulators, suppliers and many other organizations. Autonomy does not require avoiding those relationships. It means those relationships should not displace the cooperative’s ability to remain governed by and operated for the benefit of its members. At the end of the day, decisions must remain accountable to the cooperative’s member-governed purpose and to the growers who own it.

Taken together, these three Principles tell an important story about cooperative ownership. Principle 1 gives growers a **choice** to join. Principle 2 gives members a **voice** in the enterprise they own. Principle 4 protects their **control** as that enterprise operates in the wider world.

Choice. Voice. Control. They are not abstract cooperative ideals. They are part of what makes being a grower-owner meaningfully different from simply being a supplier.

So far, we have mostly looked inward, exploring the relationship between growers and the cooperative they own and govern. Next time, we turn outward: What does a cooperative owe its cooperative neighbors — and its actual ones? ♦



*Dr. Keri Jacobs,
Executive Director,
Graduate Institute of Cooperative
Leadership, and Partridge Chair
in Cooperative Leadership,
University of Missouri*

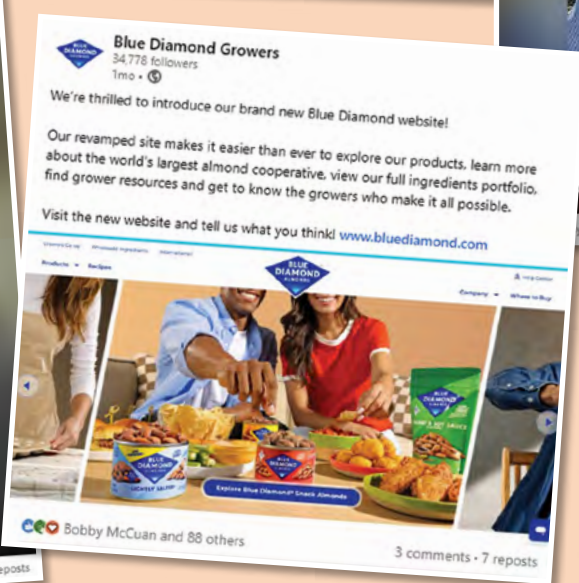
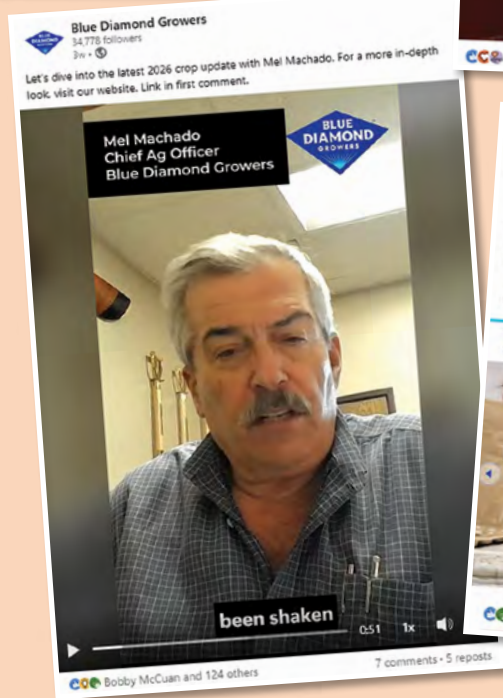
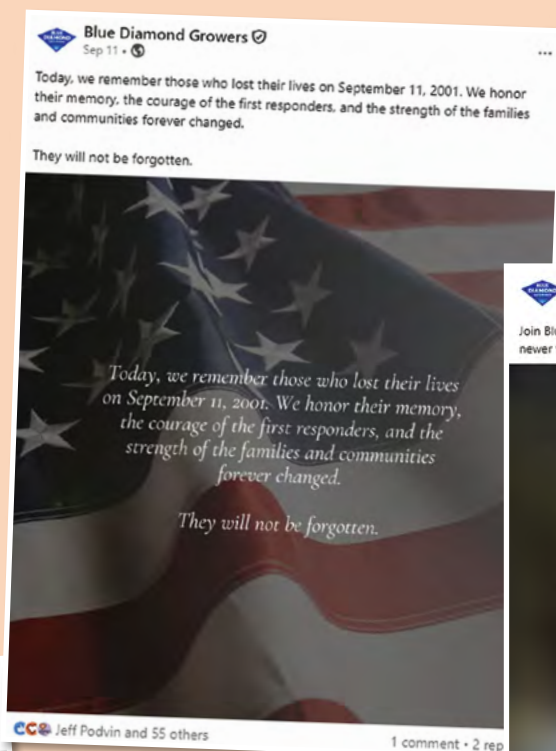
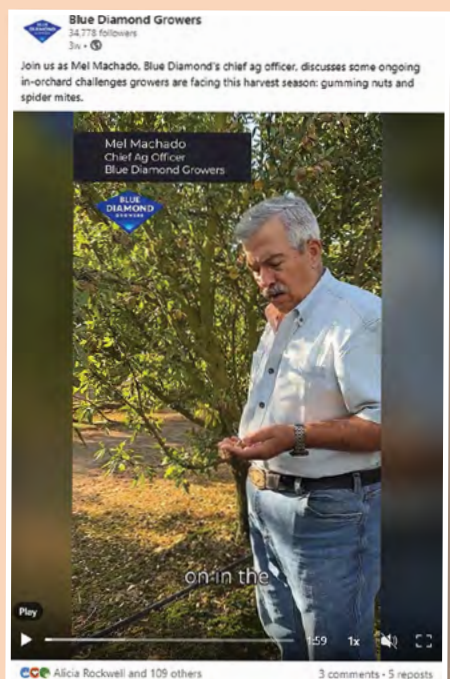
Dr. Keri L. Jacobs is Executive Director of the Graduate Institute of Cooperative Leadership (GICL), associate professor of agricultural and applied economics, and Partridge Chair in Cooperative Leadership at the University of Missouri. She works with cooperative CEOs, management teams, and boards across the agricultural sector on governance, financial oversight, and the board's role in strategy development. Through GICL, she designs and facilitates director and leadership development programs and regularly engages with cooperative boards on complex organizational issues.

Her research and outreach are grounded in sustained collaboration with cooperatives and industry partners and focus on how collective action and cooperative structures can strengthen producers' position within agricultural supply chains. Dr. Jacobs serves on the NCBA CLUSA Cooperative Economics Council and the Nationwide Board Council and is North Central Director for the Extension Section of the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association. Raised on her family's hog and row-crop farm in eastern Iowa, she holds a B.A. in economics from Coe College and a Ph.D. in agricultural economics from North Carolina State University.

#WeAreBlueDiamond Social Media Activity



Last month, *Blue Diamond* spent some time remembering the tragic events of 9/11 keeping the loved ones of those lost in thoughts and prayers. We launched a social media video series with our chief ag officer, Mel Machado, and the field team to provide orchard and market updates. Finally, we celebrated the launch of our beautiful, new **bluediamond.com** website, which makes it easy to explore for our growers, customers and consumers alike. ♦



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11/18/26

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the link emailed to
you or the postcard
mailed to your home!**

**Deadline to register:
11/11**

BLUE DIAMOND INVESTMENT PROGRAMS

Current Investment Rates available as of October 1, 2026

Blue Diamond Growers offers members short-term and long-term investment programs.

The objective of these programs is to serve as a competitive investment alternative for our members and provide *Blue Diamond Growers* with a steady source of funds. The interest rates effective October 1, 2026, for the program are listed here:

	Short-Term Investment Certificate (STIC)	Long-Term Investment Certificate (LTIC) (Maturity Date of 6/30/2029)
Initial Investment Required	\$10,000	\$50,000
Interest Rate	4.25%	2.25%
	(Variable, subject to change)	(Fixed rate)

**For more information, contact your local Regional Manager,
or Member Services at (209) 545-6225.**

This summary does not constitute an offer to sell or a solicitation to purchase investment certificates. We will provide a package of documents for the programs to those members who are California residents and who express an interest in participating in the program.

Pumpkin Bread

Cook Time: 135 minutes Difficulty: Easy Serves up to: 12

Ingredients

1¾ cups all-purpose flour
1½ cups sugar
1 teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon ground ginger
½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
½ cup vegetable oil
2 eggs
⅓ cup *Almond Breeze*® Vanilla Almondmilk
1 cup canned pumpkin puree

Directions

1. Heat oven to 350°F. Grease 9"x 5" loaf pan. Line bottom with waxed paper or parchment. Grease the paper.
2. In large bowl, mix flour, sugar, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, ginger and nutmeg with electric mixer on low speed. Add remaining ingredients. Beat on low speed until ingredients are moistened. Beat on medium speed just until creamy. Spread evenly in prepared pan.
3. Bake 60 to 70 minutes or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool in pan for 10 minutes. Remove from pan and cool completely on cooling rack, about 1 hour. Store in refrigerator if desired.





Apple Crisp Macchiato

Prep Time: 30 minutes Cook Time: 20 minutes Difficulty: Medium Serves up to: 4

Ingredients

Apple Crisp Syrup:

- ½ cup apple juice
- ¾ cup brown sugar, divided
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ¼ cup apple, chopped

Macchiato:

- ¼ cup water
- 4 cups *Almond Breeze®* Unsweetened Original Almondmilk
- 8 shots espresso

Directions

Apple Crisp Syrup

1. In a small saucepan, combine apple juice, ½ cup brown sugar, cinnamon sticks, nutmeg and apple. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to a simmer and cook about 20 minutes.
2. Remove from heat and allow to cool to room temperature. Strain and pour into a glass with a spout. Set aside.
3. In a microwave-safe bowl, combine the remaining ¼ cup brown sugar and water together. Microwave about 30 seconds, until brown sugar is dissolved. Pour equal amounts of syrup into 4 mugs.

Macchiato

1. In a small saucepan, add almondmilk. Bring to just a boil, then remove from heat. Use a milk frother to froth almondmilk mixture. Pour frothed almondmilk over brown sugar syrup and spoon froth over the almondmilk.
2. Pour 2 shots espresso over each mug. Drizzle apple crisp syrup over the foam in desired pattern.
3. Enjoy!

Growing With Care – Our 2025 Stewardship Report

Blue Diamond's 2025 Stewardship Report brings the Growing With Care framework to life. This is a practical approach to stewardship efforts that can help us achieve our purpose to share the benefits of almonds with the world for generations to come. The report shows how *Blue Diamond's* operations and nearly 3,000 grower-owners, many from multi-generational family farms, care for people, land, water and almonds.

The progress is tangible*:

- **82% of employees** said they are proud to be part of the *Blue Diamond* team
- More than **60% of member acreage** is enrolled in the Orchard Stewardship Incentive Program (OSIP)
- More than **20% of acreage** participates in Bee Friendly Farming
- Cover crops were planted in **22,000 acres**
- **73% of *Blue Diamond* orchards** use efficient micro-irrigation
- **16,763 metric tons of organic waste** was repurposed as animal feed



View the full Stewardship Report to discover the people, partnerships and practices behind this momentum, and what comes next.



2025 Stewardship Report:

bit.ly/2025-GWC

**Note: All citations are available within the full Stewardship Report.*



Dancing in the Kitchen

Julianne Hough brings movement, excitement and an authentic love for Blue Diamond to a wide-reaching, new Almondmilk campaign.

For Julianne Hough, the kitchen has always been more than a place to grab a quick bite. It is a stage, a gathering spot and, when the mood strikes, a dance floor. That mix of movement and everyday joy is at the heart of her new partnership with *Blue Diamond Almondmilk*, a collaboration designed to make familiar routines feel anything but ordinary.

The multi-talented dancer, actress and host stars in two new campaign videos that tap into the exciting place the kitchen can be, while adding Hough's signature energy. Hough turns everyday pours, sips and snack breaks into playful moments of choreography.

Almondmilk Favorites to Fuel the Routine

The campaign spotlights two distinct *Blue Diamond Almondmilk* varieties. Unsweetened Simple is made with just three simple ingredients: water, almonds and sea salt, while Chocolate Protein pairs creamy and indulgent chocolate with 8 grams of plant protein and 45% less sugar than chocolate dairy milk.

Together, they offer easy options for a wide range of routines: poured into iced coffee or matcha, served with cereal, blended into smoothies, stirred into overnight oats or enjoyed straight from the glass.



That versatility mirrors Hough's own pace. Between performing, traveling, creating and training, she looks for simple, satisfying choices that move with her day from breakfast and post-workout refueling to the spontaneous kitchen dance break.

“My lifestyle is always on the go, so I’m constantly looking for delicious, feel-good ways to fuel my day. Blue Diamond Almondmilk is a natural fit for me, and it’s something my dad and I both genuinely love. I had so much fun bringing the creative to life and leaning into that nostalgic feeling of dancing around the kitchen, making everyday moments a little more joyful.” — Julianne Hough

A Hands-On Creative Partner

Hough's role extended beyond appearing on camera. From the initial concept through the final spots, she helped shape the creative around her personality, active lifestyle and love of movement. Her choreographed work helped make *Blue Diamond* Almondmilk itself feel like a natural partner in the action.

"Julianne brought such a joyful, hands-on energy to every part of this partnership," says Maya Erwin, vice president, marketing and innovation, *Blue Diamond Growers*. "She understood exactly how to make the spots feel playful, nostalgic and completely her own. We're thrilled to pair her creativity and passion for movement with the delicious versatility of *Blue Diamond* Almondmilk."

The fit was authentic from the start. Hough was already a fan of *Blue Diamond* Almondmilk and a *Blue Diamond* Lightly Salted Almonds snacker. When *Blue Diamond* reached out, she responded that she was already a big fan of the brand.

From Screens to Stores

The two videos are built for a broad digital audience, with a guaranteed 90 million views through connected-TV streaming impressions on Hulu, Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+, Peacock, YouTube and other platforms. On social media, the campaign includes more than 300 million guaranteed impressions across channels including Meta, TikTok and Reddit.

Behind-the-scenes social content will give audiences another view of the energy on set, with snippets from the making of the commercials. The partnership will expand again in January 2027, when Hough will share recipes featuring *Blue Diamond* products on social media.

At retail, floor and shelf displays are planned for more than 6,000 stores nationwide, including Walmart and Kroger locations, bringing the campaign's feel-good invitation from the screen to the aisle. It is a fitting final step for a partnership rooted in the idea that everyday nourishment can be practical, delicious and worthy of a little celebration. ♦



The Back-to-School Breakfast Pairing Built for Modern Shoppers

As back-to-school routines have returned, *Blue Diamond* Almondmilk and Magic Spoon are giving breakfast a modern upgrade. Together, they offer Millennial and Gen Z shoppers a convenient, better-for-you option that fits busy lifestyles.

The partnership combines two brands with strong momentum and natural shopper overlap. More than half of Magic Spoon households already buy almondmilk, representing approximately 2.5 million shared households. The cross-category partnership is designed to drive trial and increase frequency.

Magic Spoon's high-protein, low-sugar cereal paired with *Blue Diamond* Almondmilk creates a complete wellness breakfast combining elevated ingredients, familiar appeal, convenience and credibility.

A national back-to-school activation will bring the pairing to select Ahold Delhaize, Kroger, Safeway and Albertsons stores through shelf talkers, coupon tear pads, and boosted co-branded social content. Shoppers may also receive free *Blue Diamond* Almondmilk with a Magic Spoon purchase.

With more than \$219,000 in combined investment across nearly 2,000 select stores, the brands are positioning the pairing as a winning breakfast solution for modern shoppers and busy families restarting their morning routines. ♦



Coming Soon: Sacramento Pop-Up Nut & Gift Shop

To continue supporting our growers following the closure of the Sacramento Nut & Gift Shop please enjoy our once-a-month *Blue Diamond* Sacramento Pop-Up Shop!

Pop-Up Shop Details:

- Located in the current Sacramento Nut & Gift Shop space
- Offers *Blue Diamond* almond products only, including gift boxes containing six-ounce cans
- Outside vendor products, gift baskets or trays containing non-*Blue Diamond* items, and taxable items will **not** be available at the pop-up shop

Need to place a special order?

- Contact the Salida Nut & Gift Shop via phone (209) 545-3222 or email orders@bdgrowers.com for special orders. Please note there will be a 15-day lead time plus ground shipping.
- **Subject to product availability**

Want to send *Blue Diamond* gifts this holiday season?

Growers who enjoy giving *Blue Diamond* products as holiday gifts are encouraged to shop the Salida Nut & Gift Shop while in Modesto for the annual meeting this fall. For special orders to be shipped or picked up at the December pop-up shop, an order deadline of November 9 will apply. A flyer with available products and current pricing will be distributed ahead of the holiday season.

Happy shopping! ♦

2026 *Blue Diamond* Pop-Up Shop Hours:
9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Pop-Up Shop Schedule:

October 14 December 2
November 4



Blue Diamond Growers Foundation Scholarship available for 2027 - 2028 School Year



Scholarship Requirements:

- Must currently live in Almond Growing Regions of California
- Must intend to pursue college major in Agriculture related field, with specific emphasis on plant and crop-related majors
- Must have 3.3 GPA or higher
- Enrollment verification to a college or university offering a four-year degree will be required for disbursement of award funds
- Application deadline: **March 31, 2027**

Scan the QR to Apply

This is a one-time award. Applicants who have applied and not previously been awarded a Blue Diamond Growers Foundation Scholarship may re-apply. Scholarship is available to applicants entering any year of a four-year degree program.

Apply via the link: bit.ly/BDGFapp2027





Mel Machado Recognized as National Nut Grower Impact Award Honoree

Blue Diamond Growers is proud to congratulate Mel Machado, chief agricultural officer, on being named one of four recipients of the National Nut Grower's inaugural Impact Awards.

The awards recognize individuals who drive innovation and progress in the nut industry, demonstrate strong leadership, and give back through service to agriculture-related

organizations, boards and associations. Machado's recognition reflects his long-standing commitment to supporting California almond growers and strengthening the industry's future.

For more than three decades, Machado has dedicated his career to *Blue Diamond* and its grower community. His leadership, industry involvement and grower-first approach have helped build lasting relationships across agriculture and have made a meaningful impact on nut production.

Congratulations, Mel, and thank you for your many years of dedicated service to *Blue Diamond* and the almond industry.

“Farming is a noble profession. It is an honor to work with growers who toil daily in the production of food for others.” — Mel Machado





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The Session Ends. The Work Ahead Begins.

As another legislative session concludes, several proposals we have been closely engaged in provide a good reminder of why participation in the policy process matters, and why the months ahead present an important opportunity for California agriculture.

Three bills in particular, AB 1603, AB 2447, and AB 2646, carried significant implications for agriculture and illustrate the range of issues the Almond Alliance works on every day.

AB 1603: Protecting Access to Crop Protection Tools

AB 1603 began the year as a significant concern for agriculture because of its proposed restrictions on pesticides containing certain perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS. Earlier versions contemplated restrictions on the registration and agricultural use of affected products, including requirements that could have classified certain products as restricted materials.

For almonds and other specialty crops, the concern was not simply about preserving individual products. Effective crop protection depends on maintaining access to a range of tools while allowing the Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) to evaluate products based on science, exposure, risk and actual use.

Throughout the legislative process, AB 1603 underwent substantial changes. The enrolled version no longer contains the earlier prohibitions on registration or use. Instead, it requires the DPR to identify pesticides that contain intentionally added PFAS in its pesticide-use database, report usage trends and publish a list of registered pesticides containing those ingredients. The bill passed the Legislature and was presented to the governor on September 3.

That is an important example of why engagement throughout the legislative process matters. Bills can, and often do, change significantly, and consistent participation helps ensure policymakers understand the practical impacts as proposals evolve.

AB 2447: Nitrogen and Water Quality

AB 2447, the Nitrogen Pollution Reduction Act, proposed substantial changes to California's Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program. The bill would have directed the State Water Resources Control Board and regional boards to revise the program, establish quantitative limits on nitrogen fertilizer application and discharge, develop statewide field-level nitrogen reporting requirements and make certain field-level data publicly available. It also authorized possible adjustments to program fees.

The almond industry has long recognized the importance of responsible nitrogen management and water quality. At the same time, growers already operate within an extensive regulatory framework that includes nutrient management planning, monitoring, reporting, and regional water quality requirements.

Our concern with AB 2447 was the potential to layer new statewide requirements over programs already being implemented regionally, adding additional reporting and compliance obligations without adequately accounting for differences in crops, soils, production systems and regional conditions.

AB 2447 was held under submission in the Assembly Appropriations Committee on May 14 and did not advance further.

Again, the outcome reinforces the importance of agriculture's early involvement, providing practical information about how proposals would operate on the ground before they become law.

AB 2646: Agricultural Labor Costs

AB 2646 would establish a \$ 19.75-per-hour minimum wage for certain temporary or seasonal agricultural employees from outside California who are hired through an approved employment process, as well as for California employees performing the same or substantially similar work for the same employer in the same county. Beginning on January 1, 2027, that wage would be adjusted annually based on the Social Security cost-of-living adjustment.

For agricultural employers, the potential impact extends beyond a single wage rate. Labor is already one of the largest costs associated with producing, harvesting, processing, and moving California agricultural products, and changes in one category of agricultural wages can affect the broader labor market.

AB 2646 passed both houses of the Legislature and was presented to the governor on August 31. The Almond Alliance has joined a broader agricultural coalition in raising concerns about the measure's potential impact on labor costs and agricultural employers.

Looking Toward November

While the legislative session may be over, the policy conversation is not. California voters will go to the polls on November 3 to elect a governor, all 80 members of the State Assembly, and members in 20 State Senate districts, along with other state and federal offices. That means Sacramento will look different when the Legislature reconvenes. There are many unknowns that come with that kind of transition, but there are also opportunities.

A new governor and newly elected legislators mean new relationships can be established and new conversations can begin. Agriculture has an opportunity to introduce itself to policymakers who may have limited experience with production agriculture and to help them understand the economic, environmental and operational realities of

producing food in California. But relationships do not establish themselves. We must participate.

That means staying engaged with trade organizations like the Almond Alliance and sharing your perspective when issues arise. It also means building relationships with policymakers and candidates and, for those who choose to participate, supporting political action committees that help strengthen agriculture's voice in the policy process.

For the almond industry, there is an additional opportunity to lead. We have the scale and economic significance to be an important voice in conversations about the future of California agriculture. More importantly, we have a story worth telling.

The almond industry has consistently demonstrated its ability to innovate, collaborate, invest in research, adopt new technologies and improve production practices. Those qualities position us well to not simply respond to policy, but to help policymakers better understand what practical, effective policy looks like.

November will bring change. With change comes uncertainty, but it also creates an opening for new relationships, new ideas and a stronger understanding of California agriculture. Our job is to make sure the almond industry is part of those conversations. ♦



Alexi Rodriguez,
President & CEO,
Almond Alliance

2026 Harvest Observations: Early Insights from the Season

California's almond harvest has nearly finished. While some of the crop remains to be shaken, swept and delivered, enough almonds have been received and tested to offer some valuable early insight into what worked, and what challenged growers this season.

These observations are intended to spark discussion while the season remains fresh in our minds. They represent the results of the test data recorded on the early crop deliveries. A more complete assessment will emerge once the entire crop has been received.

A Positive Start for Nonpareil Quality

One encouraging trend emerging from early deliveries is a noticeable reduction in reject levels in the Nonpareil. Based on early crop receipts, reject percentages are tracking near 2022 levels and represent the lowest levels seen since 2020.

That said, deliveries received in the first days of September revealed an uptick in damage, most likely from the third flight of navel orangeworm (NOW).

While statewide averages appear favorable, some growers have unfortunately experienced significant damage. Reports of double-digit reject levels continue to surface, with NOW accounting for most of the losses in these situations.

Orchard sanitation, treatment timing, local pest pressure and neighborhood influences can all contribute to elevated damage levels. In many cases, these factors interact with one another, creating situations that overwhelm otherwise effective management programs.

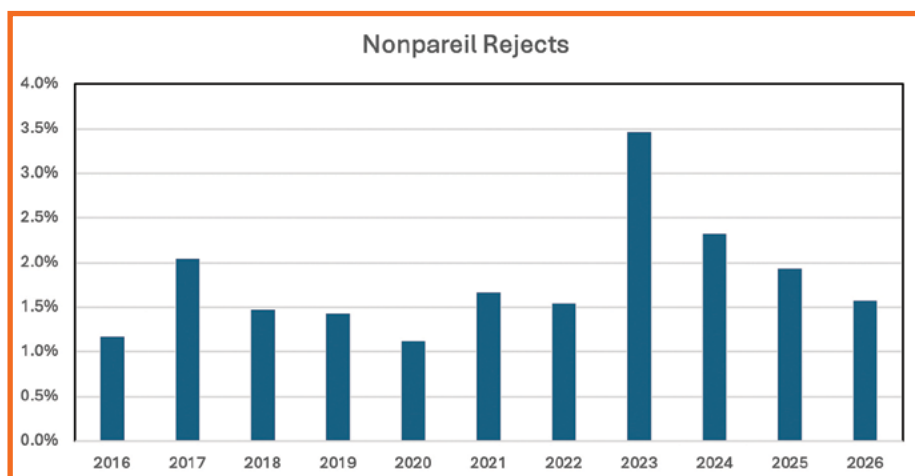
The Continuing Challenge of Under-Managed Orchards

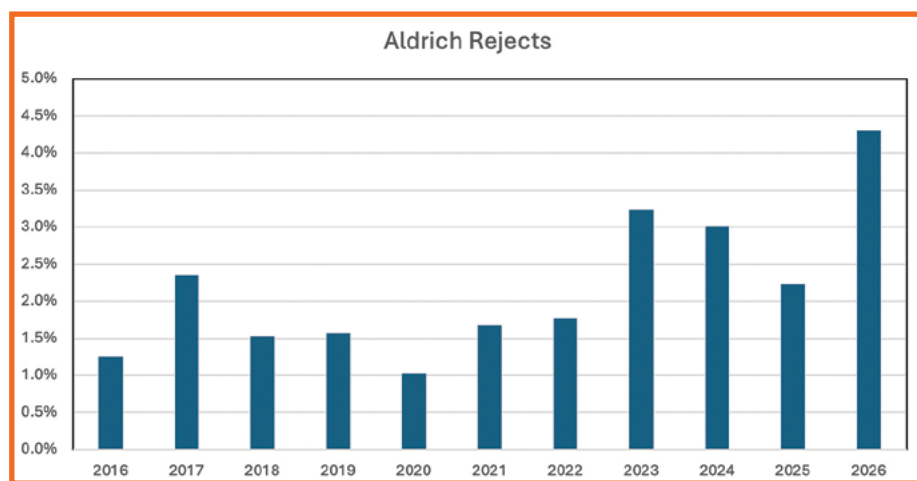
The total bearing acreage as measured by Land IQ satellite data and what is actual “productively bearing” is quite different. The relative health of the actual bearing acreage also distorts the industry’s true average per acre yield. The 2026 growing season did nothing to change this issue. There are a significant number of low or minimal care orchards throughout the Central Valley. Aside from the mathematical issues these orchards create in calculating the true average yield, they also create problems for neighboring growers by acting as a source of navel orangeworm inoculum.

Pollinizers Highlight the Complexity of NOW Control

Managing navel orangeworm becomes even more challenging when dealing with Nonpareil’s orchard partner pollinizer varieties.

While treatment timing in Nonpareil can be difficult enough, later-maturing pollinizer varieties face an additional challenge. A





third NOW flight often coincides with the actual harvest of the Nonpareil, allowing another generation of moths to lay eggs on varieties that remain vulnerable.

Although it is still too early to establish meaningful statewide quality trends for 2026 pollinizers, early deliveries of Aldrich have shown significantly higher reject levels than the corresponding Nonpareil blocks from the same orchards.

That difference reinforces a lesson the industry continues to learn: effective NOW management must extend beyond Nonpareil harvest.

Understanding Rejects Matters

Sound knowledge of the cause of your rejects is critical for effective control. *Blue Diamond* can provide you with the breakdown of damage in your deliveries, and I encourage growers to request this information on a representative number of their deliveries. The chart below shows the actual damage levels in Aldrich deliveries as vertical bars and the breakdown of the major causes of damage.

From this chart, we can gather a few takeaways:

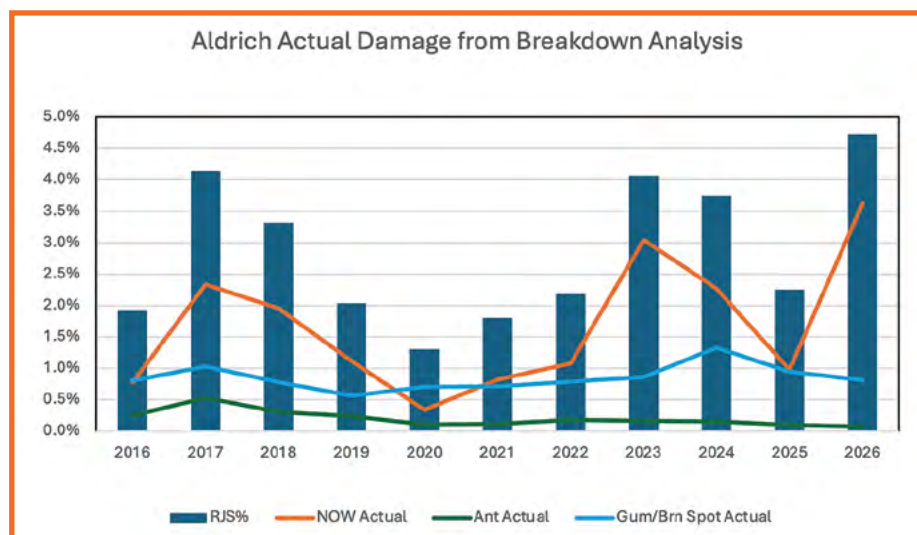
- NOW damage generally follows the pattern of the total rejects. NOW is once again the major cause of rejects in Aldrich.

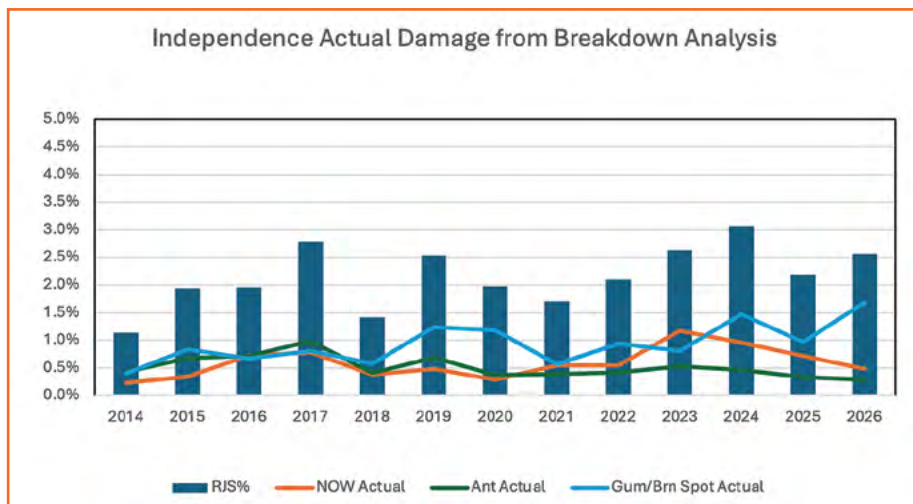
- Ants are a diminishing problem. We have effective, easy to use and reasonably priced ant bait formulations available.
- Damage from gum and brown spot due to plant bugs is a fairly stable issue, but when combined with the damage from NOW, it becomes a major reason why Aldrich deliveries fail to qualify for high-quality premiums.

Understanding which factor is driving losses is essential. Effective management begins with accurate diagnosis. Monterey and Fritz, the last to harvest, have similar challenges from NOW. But we do not currently have enough of these varieties in house to comment on. We'll cover these once harvest concludes.

Independence Faces a Different Threat

Reject levels in the Independence follow a different pattern. Leaf-footed plant bugs and stink bugs have created problems for several varieties for years. Independence is especially attractive to plant bugs, with brown spot being the result of their feeding. While losses due to NOW fluctuate, losses due to brown spot have been increasing for several years. Unfortunately, controlling plant bugs has been especially challenging. Overlapping generations and limited control options have limited growers' abilities to effectively manage this insect.





Defoliation Threatens Next Year's Crop

Much like spider mites, the most serious implications from red blotch result in defoliation of the current year's foliage and the impacts on the following crop. Growers throughout the Central Valley are noting that their orchards are covered in spider mites. I've had many calls from growers asking what to do about their orchards that have lost most, if not all of their leaves. While it doesn't necessarily mean that these orchards will not have a crop in 2027, the crop has a high likelihood of being adversely impacted. Premature defoliation reduces the tree's ability to manufacture and store carbohydrates during the critical postharvest period. Those reserves fuel bloom, leaf-out, and early nut development the following spring.

An orchard that loses significant leaf area before normal leaf drop can still produce a crop the following year but yield potential may be compromised.

Red Blotch Expands Across California

Red blotch has become one of the most discussed issues of the 2026 season.

First identified in a single Merced County orchard in 2024, this invasive fungal disease has spread throughout much of the San Joaquin Valley and into portions of the Sacramento Valley.

University of California plant pathologist Florent Trouillas has documented both disease symptoms and effective management strategies. Multiple fungicide options are now available that can provide meaningful control when applied correctly.

But judging from the number of orchards that are impacted by red blotch, it appears that many either made the economic decision not to treat, missed the proper treatment timing, or were impacted by late season rains that promoted the production of additional spores, leading to late infections. As I fly around the valley, I've noticed that the reddish hue in orchards with advanced infection is visible from the air.



Red Blotch Damage. Photo credit: Mel Machado



Severe Red Blotch Infection Leading to Defoliation. Photo credit: Mel Machado



Low or No-Care Orchards Serve as Sources of NOW. Photo credit: Mel Machado



Mites can defoliate trees. Photo credit: Mel Machado

Protecting foliage remains one of the most important principles of sound almond management.

Looking Ahead

As harvest continues, several themes are beginning to emerge.

Navel orangeworm remains the industry's most significant insect challenge, particularly in pollinizer varieties. Success continues to depend on sanitation, mating disruption, effective materials, proper timing and thorough coverage.

Plant bugs continue to cause excessive damage, especially in Independence. At the same time, red blotch and spider mites remind us that protecting tree health after harvest is every bit as important as protecting the crop itself.

The full story of the 2026 crop has yet to be told. Once harvest is complete and all deliveries have been received, we'll revisit these trends in greater detail. For now, these early observations offer valuable lessons that can help shape management decisions for the seasons ahead. ♦



Mel Machado,
*Chief Agricultural Officer,
Blue Diamond Growers*

ALMOND MARKET UPDATE



Blue Diamond Growers Almond Market Update – September 11, 2026

MARKET SUMMARY

Demand Drivers

- Global shipments have exceeded prior year in six of the past seven months.
- Exports experienced a strong start to the year (+31% YOY).
- India demand surged ahead of festival season (+170%).
- Europe remained strong despite higher prices (+6%).

Demand Constraints

- Higher prices are creating buyer resistance, with some market reducing purchase quantities or shortening coverage.
- Domestic shipments remain soft with signs of stabilization (-3.3%).
- China/Hong Kong direct shipments declined amid continued trade uncertainty (-52%).

Supply Drivers

- Harvest began two weeks early and accelerated new crop receipts for August (+55%). The increase is not a reflection of crop projection.
- Early Nonpareil quality is strong with low reject levels.

Supply Constraints

- Tighter transition between crop years due to decreased carry-in position by 2.7%.
- Yields in Nonpareil and Independence receipts are signaling a lower 2026 crop than 2025, as forecasted.
- Larger kernel sizes are increasingly limited and creating a wider gap in premiums between sizes.

Looking Ahead:

Fundamentally, the industry enters the new crop year from a solid position. The 470.7-million-pound carry-in (of which only 447.1 million pounds is estimated as edible) is down from prior year and confirms the tightness in supply from one crop to the next. Downward pressure on crop potential and overall supply and demand fundamentals continue to support a stable-to-firm market outlook. Export demand remains healthy with the coming weeks expected to provide clarity on crop size, kernel sizing and the degree to which rapidly appreciated pricing can be absorbed by end markets.

SHIPMENTS

India:

India was the clear standout in August, receiving 44.3 million pounds, up approximately 170% from 16.4 million pounds last year. The increase reflects stronger replenishment ahead of the festival season and a normalization from the unusually low August 2025 shipment level. The magnitude of the increase is notable given elevated pricing and confirms India's continued importance as the primary outlet for California inshell almonds. Local consumption will become increasingly important ahead of festival season as buyers will begin to replenish stocks that dwindled at the end of the 2025 crop year.

China/Hong Kong/SE Asia:

August shipment data highlights an ongoing shift in Asian trade flows. Vietnam posted a 10% increase versus last year, while Thailand (+84%) and Malaysia (+53%) recorded significant gains, reflecting their growing roles as processing and transshipment hubs serving Chinese demand. Direct shipments to China/Hong Kong, however, declined 52% year over year. Looking ahead, optimism remains that the September 24th meeting between President Trump and President Xi could lead to progress on trade and tariff issues, potentially paving the way for increased direct shipments into mainland China ahead of Chinese New Year.

Europe:

Europe posted another constructive month, with total shipments reaching 45.8 million pounds, up approximately 6% year over year. Western Europe increased 8%, led by Italy, Germany, and the United

Year-To-Date Shipments (August)



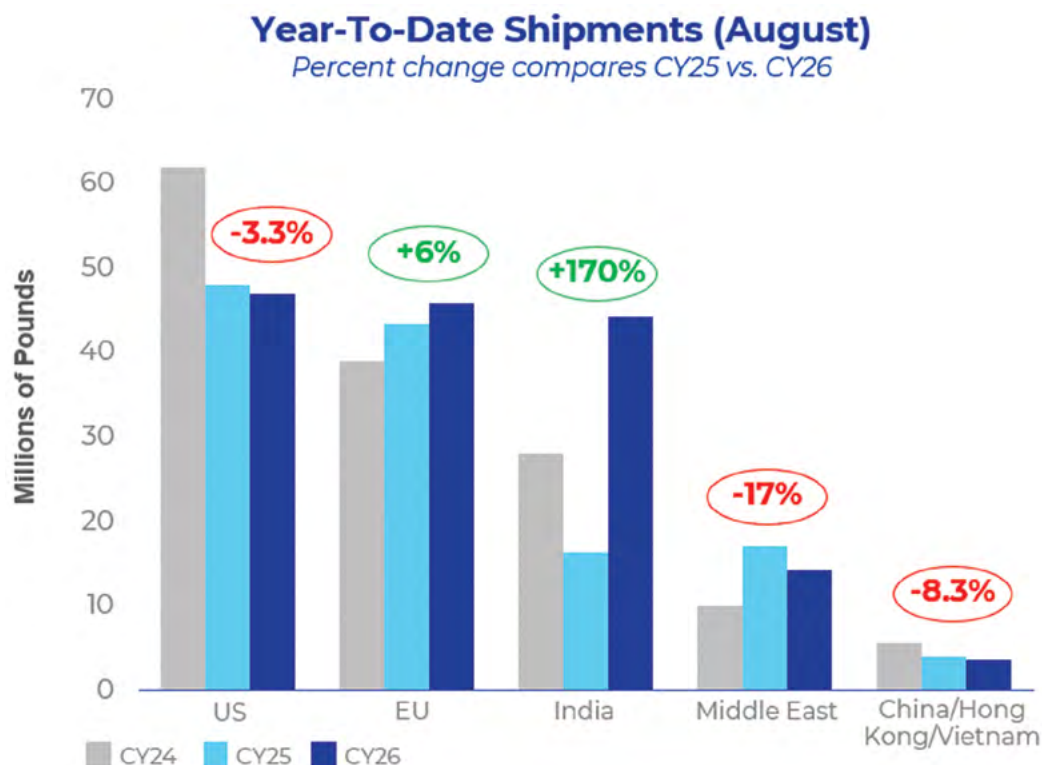
Kingdom. Despite elevated pricing, European buyers continue to seek coverage, although purchasing remains disciplined and increasingly focused on shorter shipment windows.

Middle East:

Middle East shipments totaled 14.2 million pounds, down 17% from last year. Performance varied considerably by destination. Turkey increased 113% to 7.0 million pounds, while the UAE declined 63% to 4.3 million pounds and Saudi Arabia declined 54%. The shifting regional mix, as highlighted by a 265% increase into Pakistan, continues to reflect changing trade routes, inventory positions and geopolitical/logistical disruption rather than a uniform change in underlying consumption and overall demand levels.

Domestic:

August domestic shipments totaled 46.8 million pounds, down 3.3% year over year. While this may not have been the start to the year the industry had hoped for, the improvement in shipment performance over the last six months provides optimism that the market has stabilized. As prices rose over the last month, purchasing activity slowed and shifted to closer, strategic locations. This cautious approach is expected to continue. Looking ahead, domestic demand is expected to remain steady, with a pipeline of commitments providing support for shipments in the next few months.



COMMITMENTS

Cautious buying and selling due to crop size uncertainty, paired with an increase of 33 million pounds in shipments for August has commitments down 5.5% for the first report of the season. The early crop and faster receiving pace has resulted in uncommitted inventory being up by 124 million pounds at 176 million pounds for now. We anticipate this to balance out over the coming months. The table below shows commitments and sales in both domestic and export markets.

Region	Commitments YTD	vs. PY	August 2026 Sales	August 2025 Sales
Global	497.4	-5.5%	138.8	184.2
Domestic	155.1	-9.2%	16.5	54.9
Exports	342.4	-3.8%	122.3	129.3

Volume reported in millions of pounds



A shaker removes almonds from trees in a Stanislaus County orchard during harvest. Photo credit: Mel Machado

CROP

The 2026 crop is progressing rapidly with current receipts for August coming in at 401.9 million pounds. The pacing of receipts is 55% above August 2025 due to harvest beginning approximately 2 weeks earlier than prior year. The increase in receipts over last year is not a reflection of projected crop receipts for 2026.

Nonpareil and Independence varieties are largely harvested with pollinizer varieties following closely behind. In some of the most advanced areas, growers have completed orchard harvest activities and are focusing on post-harvest practices and minimizing water stress to support next season's crop.

Current Nonpareil reject levels are the lowest in several years, though ticking up slightly, driven by a third flight of navel orangeworm. Independence rejects are trending higher than last year, mainly due to brown spot from leaf-footed plant bugs.

Yields are variable in Nonpareil and Independence depending on the region. Speculation on smaller kernel sizes coming into harvest are beginning to be realized. Yields in Nonpareil and Independence receipts are signaling a lower 2026 crop than 2025, as forecasted. There is continued downward pressure on crop potential, which will be informed by pollinizer varieties that hullers are beginning to process. Next month's report may reflect further shifts to the forecast as pollinizer volume comes in and is accounted for. ♦

RESOURCES

Blue Diamond Growers Crop Progress Reports

<https://www.bluediamond.com/category/crop-progress-reports/>

Almond Board of California Full Position Report

https://www.almonds.org/sites/default/files/2026-09/2026.08_PosRpt_7535.pdf

THE ALMOND BOARD

Before You Plant: Start With the Conversation That Determines Your Orchard's Future

Planting an almond orchard has never been a simple decision. But in today's margin-tight environment, the choice of rootstock and variety combination is more than an agronomic preference, it is a 20- to 25-year business decision that can shape profitability, harvest efficiency, marketability and long-term risk.

That was the focus of a grower-facing discussion moderated by Almond Board of California's Michael Roots, with perspectives from Dave Phippen of Travaille and Phippen, Duarte Nursery's John Arellano and grower Brandon Ribiero, at the 2026 Almond Crack Out event.

For growers, the main message was clear. Do not make a planting decision in isolation. A new orchard should begin with a practical, sometimes uncomfortable, conversation about water, soil, rootstock, variety, harvest timing, market demand and, most importantly, economics.

"Know Your Breakeven Cost Per Pound"

Ribiero put the economics plainly by saying growers should "Know your breakeven cost per pound."

That calculation should sit at the center of every planting conversation. Ribiero described it as a simple equation of cost divided by yield. If a grower expects production costs of \$3,500 per acre and assumes 2,500 pounds per acre, the breakeven is about \$1.40 per pound. If debt, land costs or other obligations push total costs to \$4,500 per acre at the same yield, that breakeven rises to \$1.80 per pound.

That difference matters. In a market where prices can move quickly and margins can narrow, the wrong yield assumption, or the wrong rootstock and variety combination for a site, can make an orchard difficult to carry through the low points of the price cycle.



Choosing the right rootstock variety combination for your orchard is a 20-25-year business decision.

Ribiero also warned that growers cannot always "save their way to prosperity." Trimming some costs may help at the margins, but yield is often what moves the breakeven number in a meaningful way. That makes variety performance, rootstock fit and realistic production expectations central to the decision.

Start With Water, Soil and Site Limitations

Before selecting a variety, Ribiero said growers should first understand "all things water" like supply, quality and rights. Without water, he noted, the rest of the planting plan loses its foundation.

From there, the conversation moves to soil. The right rootstock depends on what the site needs most, including vigor, anchorage, salt tolerance, disease resistance, replant tolerance or other characteristics.

Prior Almond Board coverage of rootstock selection has emphasized the same point. Growers should identify a site's limitations first, then select a rootstock that helps address the biggest risks.

That means soil tests, water quality information, local grower experience and advisor input should all be part of the planning process. Once trees are planted, growers can adjust irrigation and fertility programs, but they cannot easily redo rootstock selection, variety choice or pre-plant soil preparation.

Bring the Right People into the Conversation Early

Roots framed the panel around a gap that often appears in orchard planning. Growers may talk to a nursery early, but the handler is sometimes brought in after planting decisions are already made, if ever. The panelists encouraged growers to widen the conversation before committing to trees.

That group should include the nursery, handler, pest control adviser, neighboring growers and other trusted advisors who understand the region. Arellano said a nursery representative should be prepared to answer questions across rootstock, variety, fit for the site and how the planting will work operationally. If he does not have an answer, the next step is finding someone who does.

Ribiero said he often asks similar questions of different people one-on-one, looking for patterns in the answers. Where the advice is consistent, growers gain confidence. Where there are outliers, the next question should be asked.

Marketability Should Not Be an Afterthought

Phippen brought the handler perspective into sharp focus. A variety may look attractive on paper, and a nursery may be able to supply the trees, but the buying public ultimately determines how that almond is valued. Market classification, quality expectations, defects, customer preferences and regional demand all matter.

For Phippen, that means the marketing team should be part of the decision-making process. They can help growers understand what is moving well, what may be oversupplied and what buyers want. A grower may be able to produce a variety, but the better question is whether the market wants it, and at what price.

That conversation is important because handlers may serve different customers and markets. Quality tolerance, product form, timing and buyer preference can vary. A variety that fits one handler's program may not be the right fit for another.

Do Not Overcomplicate the Orchard

One of Ribiero's lessons from experience was the value of simplicity. He described a planting with multiple varieties intended to hedge risk around bloom, pollination and market movement. In practice, that complexity created harvest inefficiency without delivering a better return.

His takeaway for growers was direct. Do not overthink it. A planting plan that is efficient, repeatable and well-matched to the site may provide more long-term value than one built around too many assumptions. Simplicity can reduce operational headaches and make it easier to scale what works.

Pre-Plant Work Is the Last Chance to Get Some Things Right

The panel also emphasized the importance of pre-plant groundwork and amendments. Ribiero noted that once an orchard is planted, it is difficult to incorporate materials into the active root zone. If a site needs amendments such as lime, gypsum, sulfur or compost, pre-plant is often the best opportunity to get them where they need to be.

That point ties directly back to economics. A grower may be tempted to trim development costs up front, but those savings can become expensive if poor preparation limits tree performance for the life of the orchard.

A Grower's Pre-Planting Checklist

- Calculate your breakeven cost per pound using realistic cost and yield assumptions.
- Confirm water supply, quality and rights before moving deeper into planning.
- Match rootstock to soil conditions, site limitations and long-term orchard goals.
- Ask your handler how the variety fits current and future market needs.
- Talk with neighboring growers who have experience with similar soils, water and varieties.
- Include your PCA, nursery representative, handler and trusted advisors early.
- Review independent field data and regional trial information where available.
- Keep the orchard design practical for harvest timing, equipment and labor efficiency.
- Complete needed soil preparation and amendments before planting.

The Bottom Line

Choosing an almond rootstock and variety combination is a business plan, a risk-management strategy and a long-term commitment to a specific site. The most successful planting decisions begin before the nursery order is placed, with honest conversations about what the orchard must produce, what the market will reward and what the grower can afford.

For growers considering a new planting, Ribiero's advice is a practical place to start. Know your breakeven cost per pound. From there, every other decision on water, soil, rootstock, variety, marketability and orchard design should help answer one question. Can this orchard make money through the full price cycle?

Article Contributed by the Almond Board of California ♦



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THE BEE BOX

Flowering Hedgerows: Supporting Pollinators and Almond Production

Pollination is essential to a successful almond crop. Managed honey bees provide much of the pollination during almond bloom, but wild bees can also be highly effective pollinators.¹ Research has shown that orchards visited by diverse pollinators can experience improved fruit set, making it valuable to support both managed and wild pollinators.² Establishing flowering habitat in and around the orchard is a way growers can provide these pollinators with essential food and shelter while creating additional benefits for the farm.

A flowering hedgerow is a dense planting of perennial vegetation arranged in a linear design to provide a conservation benefit. Hedgerows can be established along orchard edges, roads, waterways, field boundaries, in power line corridors, solar fields or other areas that may not be suitable for crop production. When properly planned and managed, these spaces can become productive habitat while connecting existing areas of vegetation and creating migratory corridors for wildlife.

Providing Forage Beyond Almond Bloom

One of the biggest advantages of a flowering hedgerow is that it can provide pollinators with food before and after almond bloom. Almond orchards offer an abundant source of pollen and nectar for a relatively short period, but pollinators need resources throughout the growing season. A diverse mix of native flowering plants, shrubs and grasses can provide blooms from early spring through late fall.

Early-season flowering plants can offer forage for bees emerging from winter, while mid- and late-season flowers help fill periods when fewer plants are blooming. This extended availability of forage can be particularly valuable for honey bees, helping provide food resources

before and after they are brought into the orchard for almond bloom.³ The same plants can support native bees, butterflies and other beneficial insects throughout the season.

For growers, selecting plants with different bloom periods is an important consideration when establishing a hedgerow. A planting that offers a succession of blooms can provide greater benefits than one that flowers for only a few weeks. Selecting species adapted to local soil, climate and water conditions can also improve establishment and reduce long-term maintenance needs.



Native pollinator in on-farm habitat. Photo Credit: Cody Wilson, Pollinator Partnership

Creating Habitat, Not Just Flowers

A successful hedgerow provides pollinators with more than one source of pollen and nectar. Different pollinators have different habitat requirements, and incorporating a variety of plant types and structures can help support a greater diversity of species. Many native bees nest in the ground and may benefit from areas of bare, well-drained soil. Other bees nest in cavities or plant stems

and may use hollow or pithy stems, woody material and standing dead vegetation. A diverse, layered hedgerow, with low-growing plants, flowering forbs, grasses and taller shrubs can also provide shelter from wind and temperature extremes.

Using native or locally adapted plants can help create habitat that is well suited to the conditions of the orchard and surrounding landscape. Once established, perennial hedgerows can provide long-term habitat with appropriate weed, irrigation and vegetation management.

Potential Benefits for the Orchard

The benefits of flowering hedgerows extend beyond pollinator conservation. Research has found that habitat located within or adjacent to agricultural fields can increase the abundance and diversity of wild bees,⁴ and greater pollinator diversity has been associated with increased fruit set.² Supporting a wider range of pollinators can therefore complement the work of managed honey bees during almond bloom.

Hedgerows can also provide habitat for beneficial insects, including predators and parasitoids that contribute to natural pest control.^{5,6,7} By increasing plant diversity and providing habitat throughout the year, hedgerows can strengthen ecological function across the orchard and surrounding farm landscape.^{8,9}

These benefits can contribute to overall farm resilience.^{5,10,11} While a hedgerow is not a replacement for established orchard management practices or managed honey bee colonies, it can be one component of a broader strategy to support pollination, biodiversity and beneficial insects.

Putting Hedgerows to Work on the Farm

For almond growers, flowering hedgerows provide an opportunity to make productive use of areas that may otherwise be difficult to farm. Orchard margins, field



*Bloom Calendar from Pollinators and Agriculture, 2021 Poster.
Photo Credit: Pollinator Partnership*

edges, waterways and other non-cropped areas can potentially be incorporated into a habitat plan without taking significant land out of production.

The key is thoughtful planning. Consider the location of the hedgerow, available water, soil conditions, maintenance requirements, and the timing of plant bloom. Choosing a diverse selection of plants that are suited to the site can create valuable habitat throughout the year.

By incorporating flowering hedgerows into the farm landscape, growers can provide pollinators with food, nesting resources, and shelter well beyond almond bloom. In turn, these plantings can support wild pollinators and beneficial insects while contributing to a

more diverse and resilient agricultural system.^{5,10,11} For almond growers looking to support the pollinators their crop depends on, a well-planned flowering hedgerow is a practical investment in both conservation and the long-term health of the orchard. For more information on hedgerows and on-farm habitat, contact bff@pollinator.org. ♦



Cody Wilson,
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Pollinator Partnership*

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TIME TO CONSIDER

Harvest always seems to arrive faster than expected, and in many years, growers are still in the middle of shaking and pickup when post-harvest decisions need to be made. While the focus may still be on getting this year's crop to the huller, successful almond production requires looking ahead. The foundation for next year's crop begins long before dormancy, and the weeks immediately following harvest are some of the most important of the entire season.

Planning for Success

Post-harvest is an excellent time to sit down with your PCA, CCA, irrigation specialist and farm management team to evaluate the season and review:

- Yield results and quality reports
- Leaf tissue analyses
- Soil sample results
- Hull analyses
- Water use records

With increasing input costs and tightening regulatory requirements, developing a detailed nutrient and crop protection budget has become more important than ever. A well-developed plan reduces uncertainty and helps ensure timely decisions throughout the following season.

Water Remains the Top Priority

If there is one post-harvest practice that should never be overlooked, it is irrigation.

Almond trees are unique because harvest occurs during the same period that flower bud differentiation for next year's crop takes place. During late summer and early fall, the tree is determining which buds will become flower buds and which will remain vegetative. Water stress during this critical period can significantly reduce bloom density, fruit set and ultimately yield potential the following season. Research continues to reinforce that maintaining adequate irrigation after harvest is critical for:

- Flower bud development
- Carbohydrate production and storage
- Nutrient uptake and redistribution
- Root health
- Normal leaf retention until natural senescence

Current recommendations continue to support irrigating as close as possible to full crop evapotranspiration (ET_c) after harvest when water supplies are available. Premature defoliation caused by water stress limits the movement of nitrogen, potassium and phosphorus from leaves into storage tissues that support spring growth.

Post-Harvest Nitrogen: Less is Often More

The days of routinely applying 75 to 100 pounds of nitrogen after harvest are largely behind us.

Research has consistently shown that excessive post-harvest nitrogen applications do not improve orchard productivity and can increase losses to the environment. Current Almond Board Best Management Practices



Post-harvest irrigation. Photo credit: Mel Machado

emphasize applying nitrogen at the right rate, time, source and placement.

In many orchards:

- Post-harvest nitrogen should account for only a small portion of the annual nitrogen budget.
- Orchards with July leaf nitrogen levels above sufficiency ranges often require little or no additional fall nitrogen.
- Higher yielding orchards or orchards with lower-than-desired July tissue values may benefit from a modest post-harvest application.

The goal should be replacing crop removal and supporting carbohydrate storage, not stimulating unnecessary vegetative growth. Modern nitrogen management programs focus on efficiency rather than total pounds applied.

Potassium: Protecting Next Year's Crop

Potassium remains one of the most heavily utilized nutrients in almond production.

Deficiencies can lead to:

- Increased spur mortality
- Reduced flower formation
- Lower yields the following year
- Poor tree vigor

Recent UC research emphasizes maintaining adequate leaf potassium concentrations through July and using soil applications strategically to build long-term reserves. Potassium management should be viewed as maintaining both a checking account and a savings account. Tissue levels reflect the checking account, while soil reserves represent long-term savings.

Banding potassium fertilizers within the active root zone remains a preferred strategy. Broadcast applications outside the wetted area are often inefficient, particularly in micro-irrigated orchards.



Fertilizer application in Stanislaus County. Photo credit: Austin Jackson, Blue Diamond Growers

Foliar Nutrient Applications

Post-harvest foliar sprays containing nutrients such as boron and zinc products are valuable tools when applied before natural leaf senescence begins. The key is timing. Nutrients absorbed through healthy leaves can be relocated and stored before leaf drop. Applications made too late often provide little benefit because nutrient movement into storage tissues has already slowed. Hull analysis is the best tool for evaluating boron status since boron accumulates in the hull. Research and current recommendations continue to indicate:

- Hull boron levels below 80 ppm are considered deficient.
- Levels between 80 and 100 ppm often respond to supplementation.
- Both soil and foliar applications can be effective when properly timed.

Boron plays a direct role in bloom and fruit set, making it one of the most important micronutrients for almond production. Zinc sulfate should be used strategically. Historically, zinc sulfate was commonly used to accelerate leaf drop. Today, its most valuable use is often disease management. In healthy orchards without significant disease pressure, high rates of zinc sulfate can cause premature defoliation, reduce carbohydrate storage, and potentially affect next year's bloom. There are plenty of foliar zinc products out there, so choose the one that fits your needs.



Soil Amendment Application in San Joaquin County. Photo credit: KC Clendenin, Blue Diamond Growers

Soil Amendments and Soil Health

Post-harvest is an excellent time to address soil chemistry issues identified through soil testing.

Common soil amendment strategies include:

- Agricultural lime to raise pH in acidic soils
- Dolomite to raise pH and raise magnesium levels if deficiencies exist
- Elemental sulfur to lower pH in alkaline conditions
- Gypsum to improve infiltration and reduce soil crusting

Beyond traditional amendments, increased attention is being given to long-term soil health practices. Recent California orchard studies demonstrate benefits from practices that improve soil structure, water infiltration, organic matter and biological activity.

Winter Weed Management

The period immediately after harvest is also the best time to begin planning for winter weed control. Accurate weed identification remains critical when selecting herbicides and designing integrated weed management programs. Work with your PCA to evaluate:

- Existing weed populations
- Herbicide resistance concerns
- Pre-emergent options
- Timing relative to irrigation and rainfall

A proactive approach generally results in more effective and economical weed control than reactive spring treatments.

Cultural Practices and Orchard Preparation

As harvest concludes, many growers will also focus on:

- Orchard floor repair and floating
- Residue management
- Winter sanitation plans
- Mummy nut removal
- Equipment maintenance

The post-harvest window remains one of the most influential periods for shaping next year's crop potential. Current research continues to support a management program focused on adequate irrigation, precise nutrient applications and soil health improvement. By taking time now to review data, plan carefully and execute key post-harvest practices, growers can position their orchards for a productive and profitable 2027 season. ♦



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