

Peach Industry One Horticulture Conference Topic

Calif. Dominates Southeast, Mid-Atlantic Peach Market

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display ads in local newspapers, the "more you feature, the more you can sell," he said.

In-store sampling and other cooperative methods work to increase the sales of product. But stores need also to do a better job to get to the consumer right at the beginning of the season.

Walker provided a slide show of a wide array of national supermarkets that prominently displayed peaches for sale.

Peach Disease Challenges

On Wednesday at the conference, growers found out about disease challenges and how to combat them.

Dr. Norm Lalancette, Rutgers Cooperative Extension fruit pathology specialist, noted that unlike brown rot, fire blight and phytophthora can kill entire trees. As a result of research into how phytophthora operates, researchers have come up with a way to save trees from the dangerous root cankers that ultimately kill trees — by using what he calls "peach tree chemotherapy."

In essence, the roots are treated to intravenous (IV) fungicide treatments, "like chemotherapy to people," said Lalancette.

The disease can be easily identified by poor terminal growth, sparse and small leaves, undersize fruit, off-color fruit, overall tree decline, and eventual death. The disease can readily strike trees that are 3-5 years old. Trees display crown rot and overall root decay.

Factors that influence whether a tree will fall to phytophthora include the presence of the pathogen in the soil, the susceptibility of

the plant, and the environmental conditions.

Also, there are 10 different species of phytophthora.

There are disease-resistant rootstocks for some peach trees.

The spores are in the soil and cool weather conditions increase plant susceptibility.

To prevent disease infestation, growers should select soil that is well-drained. By placing the trees on raised beds, the root and trunk can stay well-drained. Proper irrigation management is key.

New orchards should be soil fumigated.

Lalancette worked with three regional orchards to come up with ways to manage phytophthora: Donio Farms, Inc., Zee Orchards, Inc., and Mt. Pleasant Orchards, Inc. They looked at infections of plants last spring and looking into the use of the "IV" fungicide treatments.

The research raised questions for growers: Should the trees be left to recover? Should the IV be used to help revive the trees? Or should growers, considering the cost of the IV treatments, simply cut their losses and repopulate the orchard if phytophthora is found? More work is needed to address those and other issues.

White Peach Varieties

Also at the meetings, Dr. Joseph Goffreda, associate professor and director of Rutgers Fruit Research and Extension Center at Cream Ridge, N.J., spoke about the history of white peach varieties and how they are being grown and sold today.

Goffreda provided an overview of several varieties being grown at

the center. They include:

- White Lady, a highly colored, very firm, 90 percent red over cream ground variety that is mild, with low acid flavor, very firm, and which ripens after Redhaven.

- Crimson Snow, a white freestone nectarine that ripens after Redhaven. The nectarine has 90 percent red over cream ground and is firm and fresh.

- Saturn NJF2, peen-tao type (donut-shaped), which ripens after Redhaven. The fruit has 70 percent red over cream ground with great flavor, softens fast, and is difficult to thin and pick. It has high bacterial spot resistance and tends to overcrop. It has a small blossom scar.

- Blushing Star (FA18) ripens two weeks after Redhaven, is 80 percent red over a cream ground, medium size, firm, with slight bacterial spot resistance.

- Sugar Lady, ripe a few weeks after Redhaven, is 90 percent red over cream ground. This is a fleshy, mild, "very attractive" peach, noted Goffreda.

Other varieties include Scarlet Pearl (USDA), Sugar May, ArticGlo (nectarine), Southern Pearl (USDA), Rose Princess (USDA nectarine), Sugar Giant peach, and Lady Nancy peach.

Some experimental varieties are:

- K39-1, a heterozygous SH, a few weeks before Redhaven, with 90 percent red over cream ground, short pubescence, with slight bacterial spot resistance, but good eating quality.

- D80-8, a crossbred of NJ318XH3-76, a better stony fruit, 75 percent red over cream ground, short pubescence, firm texture, exceptional fruit quality, and mod-

erate bacterial spot resistance.

- K56-4 nectarine (B8-9-46X Eastern Glo), available one week before Redhaven, very attractive, 85 percent red over cream ground, small-to-medium size, with a moderate level of bacterial spot resistance.

- L1-37 (NJ293XJing Yu) OP, available one week before Redhaven, 80 percent red over cream ground, short pubescence, very good bacterial spot resistance, and firm.

- NJ312 (NJ 293XJing Yu), ripens with Redhaven, 70 percent red over cream ground, softens fast, good texture.

- NJ318 (NJ256XBiscoe), available three weeks after Redhaven, 60 percent red over cream ground, softens fast, large size, good bacterial spot resistance, and perhaps a peach for the roadside market.

Some additional varieties:

- LF-112 (Jefferson X7-28) OP, an SH-type, available just before Redhaven, 75 percent red over cream ground, very crunchy, very hard, slight bacterial spot resistance, stays very firm.

- L2-42 (NJ293XJing Yu), SH-type, after Redhaven, 80 percent red over cream ground, nice appearance, flavor mild to bland.

- J19-19 (RR53-272X7-28), SH-type, two weeks after Redhaven, 70 percent red on cream ground, short pubescence, with a sweet, mild flavor.

Nematode Control

Also on Wednesday, growers learned about the importance of nematode control in orchards to prevent disease by Dr. John Halbrecht, Penn State. Nematodes, which are parasitic worms, result

in replant problems, loss of vigor and yield, are virus vectors, and create all sorts of problems for growers.

Nematodes, particularly the Dagger Nematodes, can upset the peach plant's normal hormonal balances. They are efficient vectors of plant viruses that can cause serious problems even in low numbers, said Halbrecht.

Growers can fumigate soil, which goes a long way to controlling the pest. There are chemical, genetic, and biorational methods to controlling the pests.

One biorational method involves the use of allelopathic plants that have naturally produced nematicides in them. They include marigolds, velvetbean, asparagus, sesame, and brassicas or rapeseed.

Experiments indicate that the use of sudangrass and sunflower in combination as a green manure produce, while decaying, enough nematicides to control the nematodes.

The green manure produces the glucosinolates necessary to poison the nematodes. He noted that, when people eat hot mustard, the "pungency" they taste is from the glucosinolate.

Someday, it may be possible to select and breed for crops with increased allelopathic activity. Green manure is showing some promise to help lower the nematode risk as well as control weeds, erosion, and promote overall tree health.

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