

June 6, 2024

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Backyard Orchards
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On May 31, 2024, I inspected the apricots behind the locked gate at the Los Altos Police Station. These apricots are beyond the age where they are commercially viable, and have had both major limbs and twigs killed by Brown Rot. They are not being pruned or maintained in any way.

The attached spreadsheet lists the trees, shows their size, and rates their both their health and structure (scale of 1-5, with 1 being the best). These old trees generally had plenty of Brown Rot killed twigs, and decayed wood down the middle of the trunks, which was the result of large diameter limbs dying and being pruned out of the tree.

These trees are a source of fungal spores of Brown Rot, *Monilinia laxa*. Spore masses form on twig cankers, and on flower parts which have become infected. Because they can spread through the air, they increase the chance that healthy, maintained trees nearby will become infected with Brown Rott. Symptoms of Brown Rot on stone fruit trees (apricot, plum, peach, cherry, etc) are dead twigs, dead flowers, mummified fruits, and often larger dead limbs and leaders. Blenheim apricot is particularly susceptible to Brown Rot.

There is no effective organic treatment for Brown Rot at this time. In an orchard in Portola Valley, I have tried different organic sprays purported to help reduce Brown Rot, with no apparent success. Conventional farmers utilize chemical sprays to control Brown Rot.

To reduce Brown Rot infections, Infected shoots and branches should be pruned out as soon as possible, infected fruits should be picked up from the ground, and should be removed from the tree. All this infected material should be removed from the orchard, as it can be a source of new airborne spores. Rain and insects can also move the fungal spores throughout the orchard. Wet weather during bloom creates the ideal conditions for Brown Rot infections

Removing these non-maintained trees would reduce the amount of airborne spores, and reduce the total amount of infections in nearby, maintained trees.