




# almond facts

NEWS, VIEWS, AND INDUSTRY INSIGHT

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2025

An aerial photograph of an almond orchard during the dormant season. The trees are bare and brown, arranged in neat, parallel rows. Between the rows of trees, there are long, straight strips of vibrant green cover crops, creating a rhythmic pattern of brown and green across the landscape. The perspective is from a high angle, looking down the length of the orchard rows.

Cover crop in the  
dormant orchards.

Lt. Gov. Kounalakis  
Visits *Blue Diamond*

The Power in  
Partnership

Mitigating  
Springtime Diseases  
in the Orchard



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- PHIL WILSON | CHICO, CALIFORNIA



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*This spring, hydrate the bees in your orchard with bee buckets.*

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In this Time to Consider article, Trent Voss discusses several common diseases growers face in their orchards and what can be done to minimize any damage to the trees.

#### ON THE COVER:

*Dormant winter orchards boast healthy stands of cover crop. Photo credit: Mel Machado*





## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

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# Climate-Smart Grant

Enrollment begins February 3, 2025

## Requirements

- OSIP participation (Double or Triple Diamond)
- Farm Service Agency Subsidiary Print
- Farm Service Agency Farm Map

## How to Apply

Use the same account login information for FarmRaise to apply for the grant as you did for OSIP.

For more information, visit: <https://bit.ly/csg-bdg>

## Questions?

Jasdeep Bains  
jbains@bdgrowers.com  
916-834-5651



## Cover Crops

\$35/ orchard acre  
Apply February 3 - April 30

## Conservation Cover

\$50/ acre  
Apply February 3 - April 30

## Hedgerows

\$8/ linear foot  
Apply February 3 - March 14

## Whole Orchard Recycling

\$900/ orchard acre  
Open on a rolling basis

# Grant & OSIP Enrollment Days

FEB  
26

## BDG Salida Office

4800 Sisk Road Salida, CA  
9:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M.

MARCH  
04

## AgWest Farm Credit- Bakersfield

19628 Industry Pkwy Dr. Bakersfield, CA  
9:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M.

MARCH  
05

## Legends Tap House & Grill

2910 Pea Soup Anderson Blvd Selma, CA  
8:30 A.M. - 2:00 P.M.

MARCH  
06

## Dicicco's- Madera

516 S I St. Madera, CA  
11:00 A.M. - 2:00 P.M.

MARCH  
07

## BDG Turlock Office

1300 N Washington Rd. Turlock, CA  
9:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M.

MARCH  
10

## Winton, CA

9605 Eucalyptus Ave. Winton, CA  
9:00 A.M. - 11:00 P.M.

MARCH  
11

## BDG Salida Office

4800 Sisk Road Salida, CA  
9:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M.

MARCH  
12

## Granzella's- Williams

451 6th St. Williams, CA  
9:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.

MARCH  
18

## BDG Chico Office

703 Miller Ave. Chico, CA  
10:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.

## Climate-Smart Grant Questions

Jasdeep Bains  
jbains@bdgrowers.com  
916-834-5651

## To Complete Grant Enrollment, Bring:

- OSIP participation (Double or Triple Diamond)
  - CASP Assessment Report
- Farm Service Agency Subsidiary Print
- Farm Service Agency Farm Map

## OSIP Questions

Daniel Dekeyrel  
ddekeyrel@bdgrowers.com  
209-876-2579





Kai Bockmann  
President & CEO



*We have kicked off 2025 with incredible momentum after laying the groundwork for many of our initiatives. 2024 proved to be a year of peaks and valleys and it was unpredictable at times. The volume of the 2024 crop surpassed that of the past two years, market prices have been rising, and we are looking forward to better returns for our growers.*

Since the Annual Growers Meeting, we have achieved key milestones and have seen some of our latest initiatives take flight. There were also some notable wins with in-store and online retailers in December and we continue to execute against our plan.

Many of our products launching in 2025 are focused on attracting new audiences and expanding our market share. We are driving new consumption by leveraging our strengths and everything that makes us unique.

After our produce launch in Atlanta, we saw some key initial wins come through, increasing our reach and customer engagement in this space. The first customer orders have started to come in and the product will ship over the coming months as grocers reset in-store offerings. We are determined to keep the momentum going.

Almonds and More, our latest mixed nuts blend, is quickly becoming a customer favorite. It launched in major grocery retail stores in November 2024, and we are looking forward to its domestic expansion this year.

It's no secret how much I love our Thin Dipped Almonds, and our Research & Development team has been hard at work to expand our footprint. I don't want to give away anything just yet, but I look forward to sharing more news soon so stay tuned!

We have also seen some great wins in club stores too. Our White Cheddar Snack Almonds are a crowd pleaser and have performed well, leading to increased distribution.

With our teams working tirelessly and so much excitement underway, we are incredibly motivated to tackle what lies ahead. It's an honor to be your President and CEO and I am grateful for the hard work you put in each day to deliver the goodness of almonds to the world. I wish you a very Happy New Year and I look forward to good things ahead for *Blue Diamond* in 2025. ♦

Kai Bockmann  
President & CEO







## Regional Managers



### Vice President, Member Relations

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### Director, Member Relations

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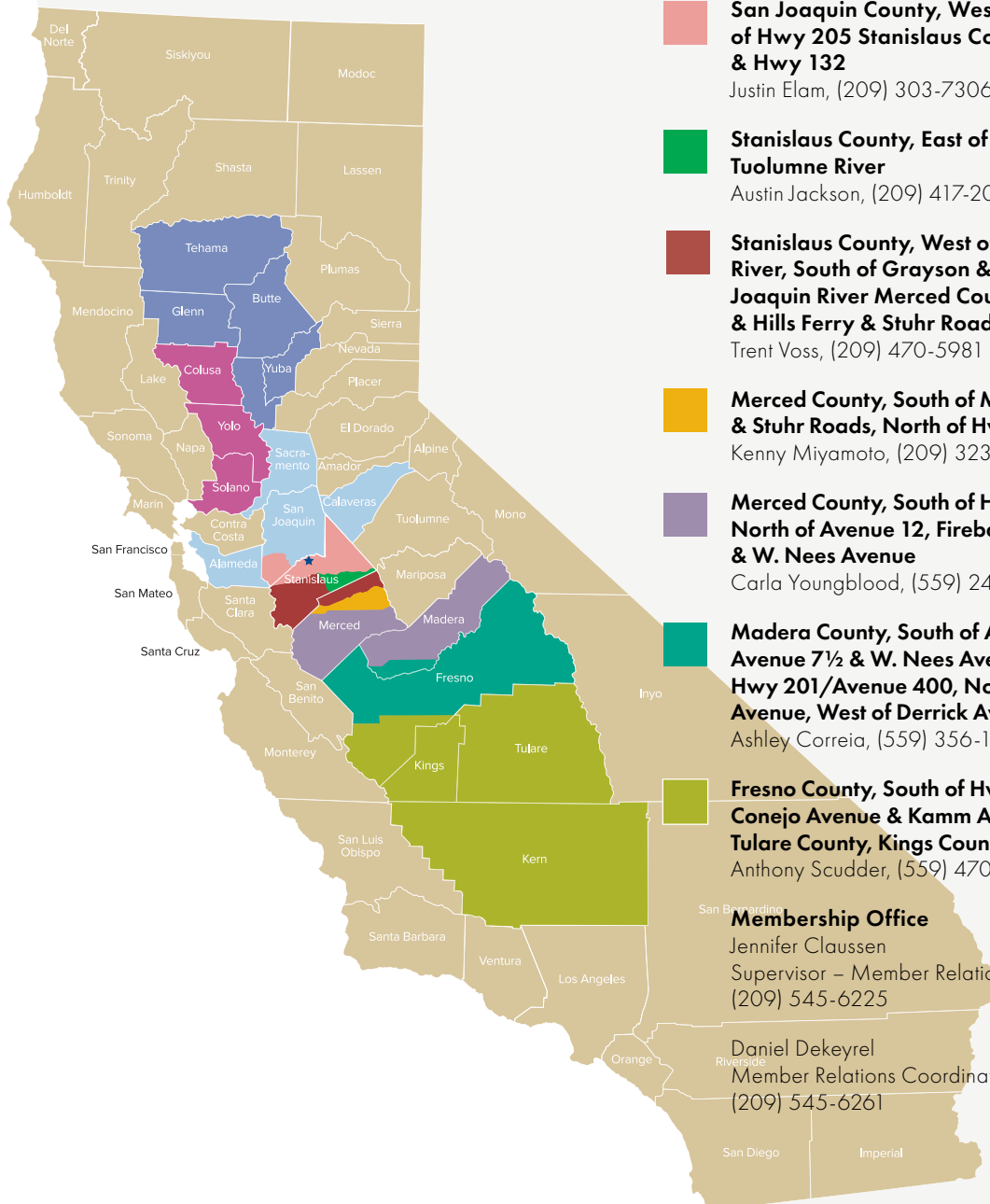
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Ashley Correia, (559) 356-1584

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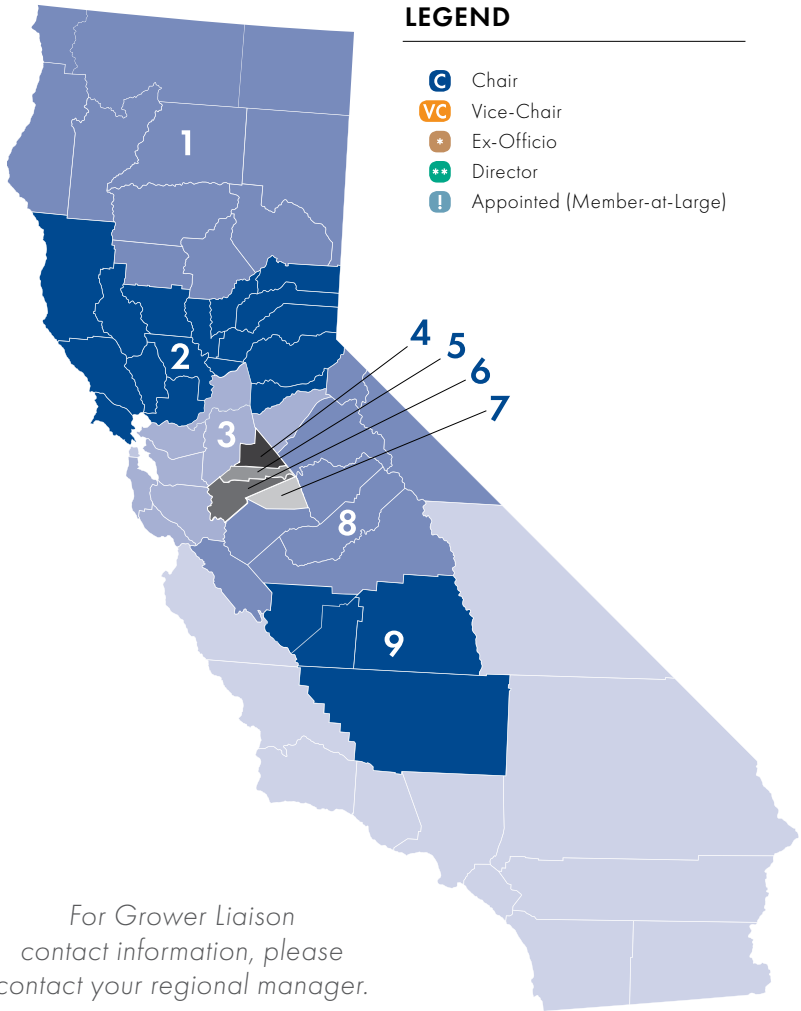
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## ALMOND MARKET UPDATE



### *Blue Diamond* Almond Market Update – January 13, 2025

#### OVERVIEW

December shipments were in line with market expectations, reaching 233 million pounds, a 1.6% increase compared to last year. Export shipments led slightly, totaling 177 million pounds, reflecting a 2% increase over the previous year. Domestic shipments showed a 1% decline for the month. As anticipated, shipments are recovering from the light volumes seen in the first two months and continue to match last year's performance.

#### SHIPMENTS

##### **India:**

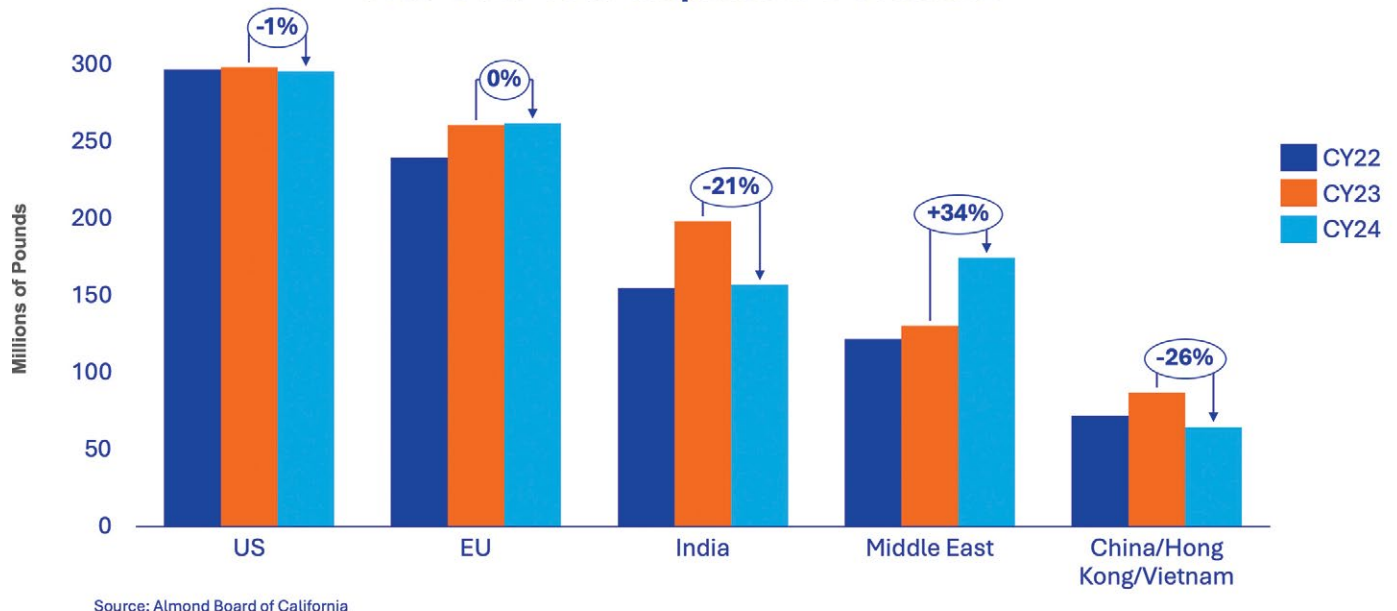
December shipments totaled 34.6 million pounds, up 70% from the record low last month but down 10% compared to last year. The year-to-date gap has narrowed to 21%, with total shipments at 157 million pounds, compared to 198.4 million pounds at this time last year. Local sales have been strong across all channels, driven by the approaching wedding season, which has depleted inventories. As November shipments reach their destinations, buyers will soon realize that inventory remains tight. Buying activity in California has picked up as buyers begin replenishing their inventories.

##### **China/Hong Kong/Vietnam:**

Shipments to the region for the month totaled 7.1 million pounds, a 45% decrease compared to last year. Year-to-date shipments trail last year by 26%, widening the gap by an additional 4% since last month. Chinese buyers continue to seek alternative supply sources to bypass U.S. tariffs, which explains the increase in shipments from several Southeast Asian countries. Regional buyers have shown renewed interest, likely in anticipation of increased consumption during the Chinese New Year festivities at the end of January. However, demand from China for California almonds is expected to remain limited in the coming months, as they turn to Australia as their primary supply source.



## Year-Over-Year Shipments December



### Europe:

Shipments to Europe totaled 64.3 million pounds, a 3% increase compared to last year, bringing year-to-date shipments nearly in line with last year's totals. While demand remains steady, several countries on the continent are showing mixed signals. Spain continues to lag when compared to last year, while the Netherlands has experienced robust growth. Germany and the UK are also trailing compared to the prior year, while France is showing an increase. With local stocks now becoming available and many California sellers offering European grades, we expect demand to remain relatively flat.

### Middle East:

The Middle East posted another strong month of shipments, totaling 26.6 million pounds, a 13% increase compared to last year. Year-to-date shipments are now ahead of last year by 33.8%, totaling 174.7 million pounds. In the past couple of weeks, buying interest has picked up following the holiday lull, with a focus on February shipments. Turkey (65%), the UAE (11%), and Saudi Arabia (84%) have all seen significant year-over-year growth, demonstrating the region's strong demand for California almonds. With healthy local stocks, in-country prices are currently being offered lower than California's. As local stocks continue to deplete, the need for replenishment will follow, signaling that sustained demand in the coming weeks is expected.

### Domestic:

December shipments totaled 56 million pounds, 1% behind last year. Year-to-date domestic shipments are at 296 million pounds, down 1% compared to the prior year. New sales for the domestic market in December were 58 million pounds, compared to 65 million pounds last year. Commitments for the largest market currently stand at 220 million pounds, lagging last year by 20.7% due to the hand-to-mouth purchasing strategy employed by buyers. With no sign of price softening, expect buyers who have been waiting to secure coverage to come to market in the coming weeks.



## COMMITMENTS

Total commitments reached 561.2 million pounds, slightly below last year's level, reflecting an 11.96% decrease compared to the previous year. Both domestic and export commitments are lower, with exports down by 5%. Uncommitted inventories have increased to 1.3 million pounds, up 9.9% from last year. New sales totaled 182.5 million pounds, a 17% decrease compared to last year, indicating the continuation of a short-term buying strategy across regions. Assuming a 2.8-billion-pound crop, current shipments and commitments account for 53% of total supply, compared to 56% last year.

## CROP

This year's harvest is complete, with crop receipts totaling 2.58 billion pounds, reflecting a 15.6% increase compared to last year's 2.23 billion pounds. However, it's important to note that last year's harvest was delayed due to weather conditions. When including the average receipts from January to July at approximately 174 million pounds, the crop estimate comes to around 2.75 billion pounds. This aligns with industry expectations, and it seems unlikely that the harvest will exceed the 2.8-billion-pound Objective Estimate at this point. ♦

### Market Perspective

December shipments met market expectations, and year-to-date performance is on par with last year's pace. Sellers are gaining confidence as the crop is delivered and prices continue to rise. Similarly, buyers are adjusting to higher prices and becoming more assured in their purchases. Destination inventories remain tight, with incoming products going directly to market instead of being stored, indicating strong demand that is likely to sustain prices into the new year. The next key milestone will be the almond bloom in February, when the industry will begin assessing the prospects of the 2025 crop.

I look forward to connecting with you at the PTNPA Convention in Scottsdale.



**Laura Gerhard,**  
**Vice President of Ingredients**  
**and International Branded,**  
**Blue Diamond Growers**





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*Our well-branched roots will be the  
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**Bright's Hybrid 5<sup>®</sup>** (USPP #18782)

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- Nematode resistant

**Krymsk<sup>®</sup> 86** (USPP #16272)

- Superior anchorage
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### Lieutenant Governor of California, Eleni Kounalakis, Visits *Blue Diamond*

This winter, *Blue Diamond*, Sacramento hosted Lieutenant Governor Eleni Kounalakis and her Chief of Staff, Matt Dumlao, for a plant tour followed by a discussion with key leaders in the Almond Innovation Center®.

*Blue Diamond*'s President and CEO — Kai Bockmann, Chief Government and Public Affairs Officer — Alicia Rockwell, VP Member Relations — Mel Machado, Sr. Director R&D — Kurt Waananen, and Director of Brand Marketing — Eric Tinson sat down to discuss the successes and challenges facing the California almond industry and how *Blue Diamond* can help support the future of California agriculture.

Kounalakis enjoyed sampling many new snack nuts and products including all three flavors of Almonds and More mixed nuts and *Blue Diamond* Almond Nog. She even tried several snack nut flavors that haven't yet hit grocery store shelves.

The team provided a sneak peek at some exciting, new events, products, and ad campaigns coming up for the Cooperative, showing that almonds are a bold, delicious, and nutritious food available in a variety of forms.

Lt. Governor Kounalakis expressed her pride in California agriculture, stating the importance of government officials truly knowing what makes each region special:

"We're living in challenging times in society. Anything that helps people feel connected is really important. I've done a lot of international work. I've never been anywhere where I didn't know what that country or region was most proud of in terms of agriculture production or product" Kounalakis said. "You don't go somewhere without knowing their delicacies. It's part of an area's identity. California is the number one agriculture state and most people who visit don't leave here knowing that. Californians know that and it makes us unique. People in government need to understand that people are proud of what they produce."

The team appreciated the time with the Lieutenant Governor and the opportunity it brought to showcase the people, products and operations of the Cooperative. We are grateful to have her as a champion of agriculture and almonds in California. ♦



L to R: Lt. Governor's Chief of Staff Matt Dumlao, Alicia Rockwell (*Blue Diamond*), Kurt Waananen (*Blue Diamond*), Lt. Governor Eleni Kounalakis, Kai Bockmann (*Blue Diamond*), Eric Tinson (*Blue Diamond*), and Mel Machado (*Blue Diamond*)



# SAVE THE DATE

## MAY 12, 2025

**BLUE DIAMOND GROWERS TOURNAMENT**  
to benefit the Blue Diamond Growers Scholarship Foundation

**Questions?**  
 Call Justin Elam  
 209-303-7306  
 Austin Jackson  
 209-417-2010


**Brookside Country Club**  
 3603 St. Andrews Dr.  
 Stockton, CA 95219  
**Registration information coming soon!**

## BLUE DIAMOND INVESTMENT PROGRAMS

Current Investment Rates available as of January 1, 2025

*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 January 1, 2025, for the program are listed here:

	Short-Term Investment Certificate (STIC)	Long-Term Investment Certificate (LTIC) (Maturity Date of 6/30/2027)
Initial Investment Required	\$1,000	\$50,000
Interest Rate	5.25%	4.50%
	(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.*



## #WeAreBlueDiamond Social Media Activity



Recently, *Blue Diamond* team members enjoyed decorating their workspaces for the holiday season. An exciting video shoot for the newest *Blue Diamond* campaign is in the works. The Cooperative celebrated Alicia Rockwell's reappointment to the ATAC for Trade in Fruits and Vegetables. And followers on social media learned about non-dairy yogurt and plant based proteins. ♦

**Blue Diamond Growers**  
27,388 followers  
1d • 🌱

Congratulations to the Blue Diamond Chief Government & Public Affairs Officer, Alicia Rockwell, for being reappointed, for the third time, to the USDA Agricultural Technical Advisory Committee (ATAC) for Trade in Fruits and Vegetables!

Rockwell's original appointment was January 2017 - January 2021 and her second appointment was 2021-2024.

This Committee advises, consults with, and makes recommendations to the Secretary of Agriculture and the U.S. Trade Representative on matters that are of concern to the U.S. and to its consumers, producers, processors, and traders of fruits and vegetables in connection with the trade policy activities undertaken by the U.S. They provide advice and information regarding trade issues that affect both domestic and foreign production and trade concerning fruits and vegetables. The Committee furnishes advisory opinions and reports regarding trade policy as requested by the Secretary of Agriculture and the U.S. Representative, or their designees.

#WeAreBlueDiamond #USDA



**Blue Diamond Growers**  
27,388 followers  
22h • 🌱

Lights, camera, almonds!

This week, we were on set bringing strategy and consumer insights to life in our newest campaign. It's a project we're thrilled to share with you soon!

Want to help shape what's next?

We're looking for bold thinkers to join the Blue Diamond team including a Senior Insights Innovation Manager.

Take a look at our openings (link in comments):

#WeAreBlueDiamond #Marketing #Advertising

2 comments

CCO Caitlin Sattler, SHRM-CP and 38 others

**Blue Diamond Growers**  
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At Blue Diamond, we don't do anything halfway, and that includes celebrating the holidays. Our first annual Holiday Workspace Decorating Contest brought the kind of energy and creativity we love.

Let's give it up for the winners who absolutely owned their categories:

- 🏆 Most Festive: Tom Tran and Laura Hecklenively, with their Holiday Dance Party that turned their workspace into a holiday rave. Lights. Music. Joy. Enough said.
- 🏆 Funniest: Michelle Lahmon, for her Elf Repair Shop. It's the holiday humor we didn't know we needed but couldn't stop laughing about.
- 🏆 Best Themed: Andrea Liu, with her White Christmas nostalgia masterclass—complete with cozy vibes and a nod to the classics.

To our winners and everyone who participated: thank you for bringing your creativity to the table. You make Blue Diamond the amazing place it is.

#WeAreBlueDiamond

3 reposts

**Blue Diamond Almonds Global Ingredients**  
7,260 followers  
1d • 🌱

Plant-Based #Innovation. Powered by Almonds.

Our Blue Diamond ingredients, #Almond Butter and Almond Protein, deliver performance.

With consistent production, high solubility, and smooth texture, almond ingredients deliver high-quality solutions for your non-dairy yogurt applications.

Let's elevate your non-dairy yogurt with the power of #almonds.

Discover more here: [https://hubs.ly/Q032TKJ\\_0](https://hubs.ly/Q032TKJ_0)

#foodandbeverage #foodtechnology #plantbased

**ALMOND INSIGHTS**  
NON-DAIRY YOGURT INGREDIENTS

Almond Butter & Almond Protein can help deliver a plant-based yogurt with these key attributes.

- ✓ consistent production
- ✓ high solubility
- ✓ smooth texture

Johnnie (Randy) Powell and 8 others

1 repost

**Blue Diamond Almonds Global Ingredients**  
7,260 followers  
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Producing Non-Dairy Yogurt with Almond Protein.

Our Blue Diamond ingredient, #AlmondProtein, is made by pressing out most of the #almond oil—resulting in a high-protein, reduced-fat ingredient. With approximately 12% fat and 45% protein, it's ideal for applications where lower fat content enhances product performance.

Let's innovate #plantbased creations with the power of #almonds.

Discover more here: <https://hubs.ly/Q031Tvm0>

#foodandbeverage #foodtechnology #innovation

**ALMOND INSIGHTS**  
NON-DAIRY YOGURT INGREDIENTS

In the creation of Almond protein most of the Almond oil is pressed out.

**RESULTS:**

12%	45%
↑	↑
REDUCED FAT	HIGHER PROTEIN

Julian Heron and 16 others

1 comment • 1 repost

## Grower Liaison Committee Meeting

On January 15, grower liaisons from each district met in Sacramento to receive updates and ask questions of *Blue Diamond* leaders like Kai Bockmann, Steve Van Duyn, Carmen Bourgaize, Tony Laurenzana, Alicia Rockwell, Mel Machado, Maya Erwin, Steve Schult, Ben Goudie, Matt Piersol, and several others. They received a crop update, domestic and international sales update, heard from the Government Affairs team, learned more about Growers Connect Marketplace, the *Blue Diamond* Climate-Smart Grant, moving to digital first approach: direct deposits, and had breakout sessions and lunch. Thank you to the Member Relations team for making this important event happen! ♦



A full room at the January 2025 GLC meeting



After the meeting, growers posed with the Almond Breeze® mower

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## Alicia Rockwell Reappointed to ATAC for Trade in Fruits and Vegetables



*Blue Diamond*'s Chief Government and Public Affairs Officer, Alicia Rockwell, was reappointed, for the third time, to the USDA Agricultural Technical Advisory Committee (ATAC) for Trade in Fruits and Vegetables.

Rockwell's original appointment was January 2017 to January 2021 and her second appointment was January 2021 to January 2024.

This Committee advises, consults with, and makes recommendations to the Secretary of Agriculture and the U.S. Trade Representative on matters that are of concern to the U.S. and to its consumers, producers, processors, and traders of fruits and vegetables in connection with the trade policy activities undertaken by the U.S. They provide advice and information regarding trade issues that affect both domestic and foreign production and trade concerning fruits and vegetables. The Committee furnishes advisory opinions and reports regarding trade policy as requested by the Secretary of Agriculture and the U.S. Representative, or their designees. ♦

**Congratulations to Alicia! We are grateful for her ongoing service on behalf of the Cooperative.**



### Almond Breeze® Beef Stew

Prep Time: 15 minutes   Cook Time: 1 hour 40 minutes   Difficulty: Easy   Servings: 4

#### Ingredients

##### Stew:

4 slices bacon, chopped  
1 pound beef chuck, cut into cubes  
½ cup all-purpose flour  
1 cup beef broth  
2 Tablespoons tomato paste  
¾ cup *Almond Breeze®* Unsweetened Original Almondmilk  
2 Tablespoons Dijon mustard  
6 shallots, peeled and cut in half  
6 carrots, peeled and cut into 1-inch chunks  
Salt  
Ground black pepper  
Chopped fresh parsley for garnish

#### Directions

1. Cook bacon in a heavy pot or Dutch oven over medium-high heat until browned and crispy.
2. Remove bacon from the pot and drain on paper towels, leaving the bacon fat in the pot.
3. Combine beef with flour, salt, and black pepper in a plastic bag and shake until beef is coated evenly; add to pot and cook over medium-high heat until browned.
4. Add shallots, carrots, and tomato paste to beef and stir. Pour in broth and simmer for 90 minutes.
5. Stir cooked bacon, *Almond Breeze®* almondmilk, and mustard into beef mixture and bring to a simmer.
6. Ladle stew into bowls and garnish with parsley.



## **Blue Diamond Almond Flour Crinkle Cookies**

Prep Time: 60 minutes   Cook Time: 15 minutes   Difficulty: Easy   Servings: 18

### **Ingredients**

- ¼ cup unsalted butter, softened
  - 2 Tablespoons *Almond Breeze®* Unsweetened Original Almondmilk
  - 1½ cups powdered sugar, divided into two ¾ cup portions
  - 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
  - 1½ cups *Blue Diamond* Almond Flour
  - ½ teaspoon salt
  - ½ cup almonds, finely diced
- 



### **Directions**

1. In a large bowl, using an electric hand mixer, beat butter and almondmilk until smooth and creamy. Add ¾ cup powdered sugar and beat until well combined. Beat in vanilla.
2. At low speed, slowly add in almond flour and salt. Mix until dough comes together. Stir in almonds.
3. Cover dough and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes.
4. Preheat oven to 325°F. Prepare a baking sheet with parchment paper.
5. Place remaining ¾ cup powdered sugar in a shallow bowl.
6. Scoop dough into 1 tablespoon balls and roll in powdered sugar until fully covered in sugar, then place on baking sheet about 1 inch apart. Do not flatten.
7. Bake 15-18 minutes, until golden brown on the bottom. Allow cookies to cool for about 5 minutes on the baking sheet, then gently remove to wire rack to cool completely. Enjoy!

*Recipe compliments of the Blue Diamond Research & Development team.*





## Blue Diamond Teams up with Mike's Hot Honey Infused with Chilies for a Sweet and Spicy Snack Nut Combination

Blue Diamond is thrilled to team up with the number one hot honey brand to release a limited time snack nut flavor: Mike's Hot Honey® Flavored Almonds. Our California-grown almonds are roasted with hot honey flavoring, giving a great kick to this favorite



snack. The sweet-heat combination is an excellent addition to lunches, to enjoy while running errands, or just for a healthy treat that packs eight grams of plant protein. Mike's Hot Honey® is made from all Natural 100% Pure Honey Infused with Chili Peppers, and is the flavor inspiration for this new snack. It's perfect for those who enjoy a mix of sweet and heat in the same bite.

In early February, this limited time flavor will be available on Amazon in a 12-count pack of 1.5-ounces individual servings for \$14.99. Later in the month, 6-ounce cans will be available for \$2.98 per can in thousands of Walmart stores across the country, all while supplies last. ♦

## Blue Diamond's National Almond Day Event in Sacramento

With National Almond Day coming up on February 16, *Blue Diamond* is excited to hold an event in Sacramento that will be open to local consumers. Local media and influencers will be invited as well. The team plans to use this event to establish awareness for the *Blue Diamond* product portfolio and connect the brand to National Almond Day.

The event will be held at Urban Roots ([urbanrootsbrewing.com](http://urbanrootsbrewing.com)), a craft brewery and smokehouse restaurant in Downtown Sacramento known for championing all things Sacramento. They previously hosted the *Blue Diamond* Snack Almonds Big 10 and "Tallmondboy" fall football event in November 2024. The event will take place on the outdoor patio to ensure that the Nutty Cruiser will have full visibility as a part of the almond celebration.

The patio will include branded stations for *Blue Diamond* products including *Almond Breeze*®, Snack Almonds, Almonds and More, Nut-Thins, and a dessert station featuring Thin Dipped Snack Almonds and *Blue Diamond* Almond Flour baked treats. The event will also feature a National Almond Day flower wall—inspired by almond bloom—for guests to pose in front of for photographs.



The *Blue Diamond Nutty Cruiser* will be making its California debut! It will provide Snack Almonds samples as well as games and opportunities to win *Blue Diamond* swag.

The **Almond Breeze®** station will include a coffee cart with beverages provided by Camellia Coffee Roasters ([camelliacoffeeroasters.com](http://camelliacoffeeroasters.com)) where a Camellia team member will be on-site crafting hot beverages using *Almond Breeze®* Barista Blend. To showcase versatility with a cold beverage option, the *Almond Breeze®* station will also have bike blenders available as an interactive activity for guests. Attendees can blend their own smoothies on a bike blender using fresh fruits and *Almond Breeze®* Almondmilk.

To highlight **Snack Almonds** flavors alongside Urban Roots craft beers, the Snack Almonds table will include samples of Mike's Hot Honey Almonds, Smokehouse Almonds, and Spicy Dill Pickle Almonds. Attendees 21+ can also enjoy a beer flight paired with *Blue Diamond* Snack Almonds.

*Blue Diamond Almonds and More* will receive its own station to celebrate its arrival and draw awareness of this new, exciting product. At this station, attendees will receive samples of all Almonds and More flavors: Smokehouse, Roasted Sea Salt, and Honey Roasted.

The **Nut-Thins** station will feature a variety of Nut-Thins flavors along with a spread of charcuterie, cheese and/or dips for consumers to try. Nut-Thins Flavors available will be: Hint of Sea Salt, Cheddar Cheese, and Artisan Multi-Seed.

Local media and influencers from the Sacramento area are invited to provide coverage of the event and National Almond Day. Also invited are local Sacramento government and personnel to help showcase *Blue Diamond's* hometown support. Calendar listings will also be posted on local channels to advertise the free event.

For National Almond Day, *Blue Diamond* will be hosting flash deals at the Nut & Gift Shop and on Amazon.

"It's an honor to, once again, partner with Urban Roots to celebrate National Almond Day!" said Maya Erwin, *Blue Diamond's* VP of Marketing and Innovation. "*Blue Diamond* is making a splash in the Sacramento community by providing product sampling in a variety of treatments. From Almonds and More samples to drinks made with *Almond Breeze®* Barista Blend, there will be something for everyone to be excited about. We hope our community is as excited to expand their celebration of National Almond Day as we are!" ♦

### After the National Almond Day event, the Nutty Cruiser will appear at a series of events:

- **February 17:** The Nutty Cruiser delivers lunch to the 2024 Annual Growers Meeting drawing winner in Hughson, Ca.
- **February 18:** The Nutty Cruiser visits the *Blue Diamond* Salida and Turlock Plants for a photo opportunity and to deliver treats.
- **February 19:** The Nutty Cruiser visits the *Blue Diamond* Headquarters in Sacramento.







## Power in Partnership

*"Power in Partnership" has been a core principle of Blue Diamond since its founding in 1910. In 1911, just a year after becoming a cooperative known as the California Almond Growers Exchange, J.P. Dargitz, the primary founding organizer, stood before the members with a report on overcoming the adversity they faced in the first year.*

*"Naturally, we have had many obstacles to meet and overcome as you are all aware, but with the very generous assistance rendered by the members and directors of this Exchange...and by the very earnest and upright method of doing business, that [sic] we have been able to overcome practically every obstacle that has presented itself."*

—J.P. Dargitz,

Founding Organizer of Blue Diamond



*J.P. Dargitz*

So, true as it was during the founding of our cooperative, for the most part, we face the same challenges today. We just experienced an unprecedented period of poor market conditions, coupled with high production costs, and ever-increasing regulatory burdens. Although the horizon looks brighter from a supply and demand balance perspective, many challenges remain. We will always face headwinds as a business and on the farm, yet the solution remains the same: partner together to stand strong in the face of these challenges.

As we begin the 2025 crop year, I thought it would be good to outline the most critical areas where we will need your partnership to work towards the most effective year possible. Blue Diamond leadership and staff have a robust plan, and what I will outline below are some elements that you can get involved in to be a force multiplier.

### Accurate Acreage Records

The Membership team has a key initiative for 2025 to verify accurate records as we prepare for harvest. With nearly 50,000 deliveries each year there's no doubt that it can be hard to keep up with changes, and maintaining accurate records is a serious task. Please let your regional manager know right away if you plan on pulling out acreage or planting new acreage this year. Receiving updated acreage records allows us to forecast effectively, ensuring that we understand the upcoming supply for the new year. Later this spring, we will provide an acreage survey that asks you to verify your current orchard configuration. Please be sure to send those back to us as complete as possible.

### Taking a Digital First Approach

We have seen tremendous growth in sign-ups for access to the Blue Diamond Portal. One recently added feature is notifications for updates, such as new deliveries, grades, and payments. We will continue to enrich the portal feature, so that it serves as your one source of truth as a member-grower. One aspect that has been essential is the ability to run reports and pull up key information which has enabled member-growers to support their year-end bookkeeping, as well as serving as the basis to verify volumes for recent USDA payment programs.

Moving toward a digital first approach is something you will hear much more about in the coming year. We are seeking to make gains in efficiency by enrolling most member-growers, assignees, and renters to receive payments via direct deposit. Direct deposit is a much more secure, efficient, and timely

way to receive payments. You can receive payments 3-4 days sooner with no concern of lost mail. Eliminating paper checks also removes the chance for mail thieves to fraudulently attempt to cash *Blue Diamond* checks. If you are not already signed up for direct deposit, please contact your regional manager who can help you enroll. Stay tuned for more information on our plans to help our member-growers move to a safe, secure and efficient digital first reality.

## Advocate in 2025

With a new administration and many new elected officials taking office, 2025 will bring a new governmental and policy environment. Our Government Affairs team is constantly assessing the political and regulatory landscape for any new regulations or legislation that may affect our business. This includes not only items like new packaging laws that impact our operations and manufacturing, but also farm level issues such as water and environmental regulation. On the federal level, the recent USDA MASC program provided direct payments to growers, and as 2025 progresses, we will continue to watch for and notify you of additional opportunities for direct payment. The major message here is to follow our "At the Capitol" legislative reports, as well as keep an eye out for "Advocacy Alerts" via email. One thing we know for sure is that when new issues pop up, we need your partnership as a member-grower to advocate on behalf of the Cooperative. The collective voice of our member-growers is the strongest force in advocating for the benefit of the cooperative community. It is vital to the conversation. Our Government Affairs team and industry organizations advocate on your behalf every day, but know that our legislators truly listen when a *Blue Diamond* farmer speaks up.

## Orchard Stewardship Incentive Program (OSIP)

We continued a strong growth trajectory and had very successful participation in OSIP for crop year 2023. And again, for the 2024 crop year, we have a goal to renew and maintain *Blue Diamond's* currently enrolled acreage in the program. The enrollment period for crop year 2024 started in November and will be open until April 30, 2025. The incentive program is largely unchanged this year, and if you are simply renewing again, we estimate it should take less than an hour to complete the necessary updates. The

key change this year is that the Farm Raise platform will facilitate the application process instead of the basic web form we used previously. Look for workshop opportunities or contact your regional manager to make sure you are enrolled in the OSIP program. Don't pass up the available incentives!

## The Climate-Smart Grant (CSG):

Another great area that exemplifies the "Power in Partnership" is the opportunity to participate in the USDA Climate-Smart Grant which is exclusive to *Blue Diamond* member-growers and administered by our staff. **Whole Orchard Recycling (WOR) is now available**, with an ongoing open enrollment period. The application period for cover crops, conservation cover, and hedgerows begins **February 3, 2025, and will close April 30, 2025**. Please watch for communications regarding 2025 workshops this spring. Please remember, in order to take advantage of grant funds, you must participate in the OSIP program.

In farming, challenges and uncertainty are the norm, and managing risk becomes the objective. Partnering together and leveraging the power of our member-growers started with the founding of our cooperative with a prime goal of managing that risk and maximizing grower returns. Today, partnership has a much broader meaning. Working together with buyers and customers by leveraging *Blue Diamond's* sustainability accomplishments and working directly with the USDA to administrate grant funding are just a couple of the ways we share new opportunities. Lastly, let's not forget our close relationships with our local huller-sheller partners who work tirelessly to bring in a quality crop year after year to maximize member-grower returns. Together, we are all partners, and there truly is "Power in Partnership." ♦



**Ben Goudie,**  
**Director, Member Relations,**  
**Blue Diamond Growers**





### Former *Blue Diamond* Board Chair, Dan Cummings, Honored with Almond Achievement Award

*The Almond Board of California announced the winners of its annual industry awards during the luncheon on Wednesday, Dec. 11, at The Almond Conference, held at the SAFE Credit Union Convention Center in Sacramento. The 2024 Almond Achievement Award was presented to Dan Cummings.*

#### Almond Achievement Award

Described by newly elected Almond Board Chair Alicia Rockwell as a “leader and visionary,” Dan Cummings has dedicated 40 years to the almond industry. He has managed up to 11,000 acres of almonds and walnuts, provided mentorship to future leaders, and supported agricultural research through in-kind contributions.

His extensive global representation of the California almond industry includes participation in a dozen International Nut and Dried Fruit Council (INC) meetings and advocacy efforts in China, Russia, Europe, and beyond. Cummings also served on the Almond Board of

California for over a decade and chaired *Blue Diamond Growers’* board for nine years. Notably, he founded Project Apis m., promoting pollinator health and sustainability.

#### More about this award

Beginning in 2011, the goal of the Almond Achievement Award has been to recognize an industry member who has added value through long-term service for the betterment of the California almond industry. Award recipients are individuals with long-standing and direct involvement, who demonstrate lasting impact on, and commitment to, the California almond industry. ♦



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# Blue Diamond Growers Foundation Scholarship available for 2025 - 2026 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, 2025**

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.mykaleidoscope.com/scholarships/BlueDiamondGrowersScholarship2025](https://apply.mykaleidoscope.com/scholarships/BlueDiamondGrowersScholarship2025)



## Current Washington Situation

### **Congress, the Farm Bill, and Government Funding.**

At the end of last year, Congress adjourned by pushing decisions on federal funding and reauthorization of the Farm Bill to the new Congress.

Congress convened on January 3, 2025, with Republicans in charge of both the House and the Senate. When President Trump was sworn in for a second term on January 20, 2025, Republicans were moved to the unique position of controlling both chambers of Congress and the Administration.

The House re-elected Representative Mike Johnson (R-LA-04) Speaker of the House and Representative Hakeem Jeffries (R-LA-08) as Minority Leader. In the Senate, Senator John Thune (R-SD), a longtime member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, was elected the new Republican Majority Leader. This is the first change in Senate Republican leadership in over 18 years and follows former Leader Mitch McConnell's (R-KY) announcement that he is stepping down from his leadership post. Senator Schumer (D-NY) was re-elected as the Democrat Leader in the Senate.

The first few months of 2025 will be consumed with Senate confirmation of President Trump's nominations for key administration posts. President Trump has named Brooke Rollins of Texas as Secretary-designee for the Department of Agriculture. Rollins is a former Trump Administration White House aide and most recently served as CEO of the America First Policy Institute. President Trump has also named Jamieson Greer as his designee for U.S. Trade Representative. Greer was former trade representative Robert Lighthizer's Chief of Staff. Confirmation hearings for these nominations will take place in the first quarter of the year and will define agriculture and trade policy under the Trump Administration.

With single party control of the Congress and the Administration, Republicans will utilize unique procedural rules to pass Republican priorities using a simple majority. This process is commonly referred to as reconciliation and bypasses Senate requirements for a supermajority to pass legislation. Congressional Republicans have announced that they will use reconciliation to reauthorize the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, increase immigration enforcement and invest in American energy.

In December, Congress passed a continuing resolution to fund the government through March 14, 2025. This funding measure continued current spending levels for the entire government, including the Department of Agriculture. In an already packed Congressional schedule, a final agreement on government spending will be difficult.

As a part of the continuing resolution, Congress extended the Farm Bill through September 30, 2025. This extension unlocks funding for the Market Access Program which had been on hold while Congress was determining how to move forward with farm programs. The MAP program supports *Blue Diamond's* international efforts to expand markets.

The Department of Agriculture announced \$2.65 billion in economic assistance for specialty crops, including almonds. Modeled after CFAP2, the Marketing Assistance for Specialty Crop (MASC) program will help specialty crop producers expand markets.

In the new Congress, the Senate Agriculture Committee will be led by Chairman John Boozman (R-AR) and Ranking Member Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), who takes over the top Democrat position with the retirement of former Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow (D-MI).

Representative G.T. Thompson (R-PA-15) remains Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee and will lead the Committee with Representative Angie Craig (D-MN-02) who was elected Ranking Member after defeating longtime Ranking Member Representative, David Scott (D-GA-13), in a contested election.

**International Trade:** During his campaign, President Trump regularly suggested that all products imported into the U.S. should be subject to tariffs of 10-20%. While it remains to be seen if President Trump will follow through on these tariffs, the agriculture community is deeply concerned as retaliatory tariff measures traditionally target agriculture exports.

The *Blue Diamond* team is building relationships with newly elected and appointed officials. Additionally, the team is collaborating with existing elected members and career administration officials to advise on the Cooperative's highest priority issues like preserving Sec.199a and advancing market programs.

Remember that during President Trump's first term, grower engagement and activation moved policymakers to act and heed email alerts for requests. You are making a difference, and we urge you to continue letting your voice be heard. ♦



**Lynn Jacquez**  
Of Counsel, JPH Law Firm,  
Senior Advisor,  
Husch Blackwell Strategies



**Stacy McBride,**  
Executive Vice President,  
Federal Government Affairs at  
Husch Blackwell Strategies

A large advertisement for BOWSMITH irrigation products. The top features the BOWSMITH logo in white on a green background. Below the logo is a photograph of an agricultural field with rows of trees and active microsprinklers. The bottom of the ad is a green banner containing product names and contact information.

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### THE BEE BOX

## Why You Need Hedgerows and How to Install Them

Hedgerows are permanent plants that provide perennial habitat for pollinators and other beneficial insects. Often planted on field edges or non-cropped “spare” areas, these are usually native shrubs or trees. Once established, a process that can take up to three years to accomplish, they are easy to maintain. They provide drought-resistant and often fire-resistant havens for the “good guys” that increase soil health and can enhance pollination services. Hedgerows are a win for the farmer and the natural biodiversity that provides ecosystem services to nearly every farm scenario. Here’s the step-by-step process to accomplish this on your land.

### Step 1: Site Selection

Small margins of land directly next to orchards, row crops, and pastures are ideal for hedgerow habitat. If sites are long and narrow, a single row of plants or “hedgerow” can be installed. If sites are square or trapezoid-shaped, multiple parallel rows can be installed. In either case, sites are measured in linear feet and will need access to irrigation

in areas without summer rainfall. A linear design allows for easier irrigation layouts.

### Step 2: Site Preparation and Irrigation Installation

#### Weed Control Before Planting

Proper weed control is vital to the success of establishing pollinator habitat. Ideally, sites should remain weed-free for 12 months before planting. A combination of foliar and pre-emergent herbicides or repeated cultivation can be used to address both living and dormant vegetation. It is critical that applicators are fully aware that pre-emergent herbicides are carefully selected so they don’t interfere with planting. Each site will need to be checked monthly (at minimum). The site should be re-treated if new plant growth occurs.

#### Reduction of Existing Vegetation

Site preparation activities also include the removal of dead leaves, stems, and other plant material to prepare the site for seeding and ensure good seed-to-soil contact. If large amounts of plant matter persist on the ground, it may be necessary to remove the plant residue by raking.



Capay Hills Orchard. Photo credit: Brian Paddock



49er Almonds. Photo credit: Frank Lu

## **Irrigation Design and Installation**

Installing irrigation greatly increases the chances of successful establishment. A drip system with emitters placed every five feet and a few inches from the base of each plant is sufficient. Install irrigation after site preparation has been completed and before planting begins.

### **Step 3: Hedgerow Installation**

Fall is the best time to plant hedgerows. In California, October 15 through November 10 is typically a time when growers can divert attention from harvest to planting habitat. This allows the native plant species to establish deep root systems before the hot and dry summer season begins. This is subject to change based on annual weather events.

Plants can be planted linearly to create a hedgerow or in a serpentine fashion which essentially creates parallels of hedgerows. The recommended mix of plants contains species that have a wide range of sizes when they reach maturity. To install these plants in an efficient manner, each species will be categorized as large or small. The exact order or placement of each species doesn't matter as long as they alternate between small and large. Plants should be spaced five feet apart.

Planting should occur as quickly as possible upon delivery. If the project installation happens over multiple days, plans should be made to properly stage unused plants so they can be watered. Each plant should be carefully extracted from the container to ensure the root ball remains undisturbed. The size of each hole will be determined by the size of the plant. Each hole should be about twice the size of the plant's root ball. Plants can die in as little as eight hours after planting so extra care should be taken to pre-irrigate each hole and/or irrigate immediately after planting. Dry soil will have a desiccating effect on the root zone.

## **Management**

### **0 to 12 Months After Installation**

Regularly surveying the site for weeds is critical during the first year of establishment to prevent weeds from outcompeting the plants before they have fully matured. The more attention spent on weed control and proper irrigation while the plants are still young and vulnerable, the better the habitat will be throughout their lifetime. While native plants require less maintenance over time, the installation of any new habitat will require some attention to ensure its success.

### **12-24 Months After Installation**

Surveying for weed re-establishment should continue throughout the lifetime of the project. Management activities, including spot mowing or targeted spot herbicide treatment, should be anticipated to keep control over weeds and prevent re-establishment or spread. However, once the habitat reaches maturity, management actions will be greatly reduced as the desired vegetation will naturally outcompete weeds. Targeted herbicide treatments, like spot spraying resistant weeds, can occur if needed.

## **Irrigation**

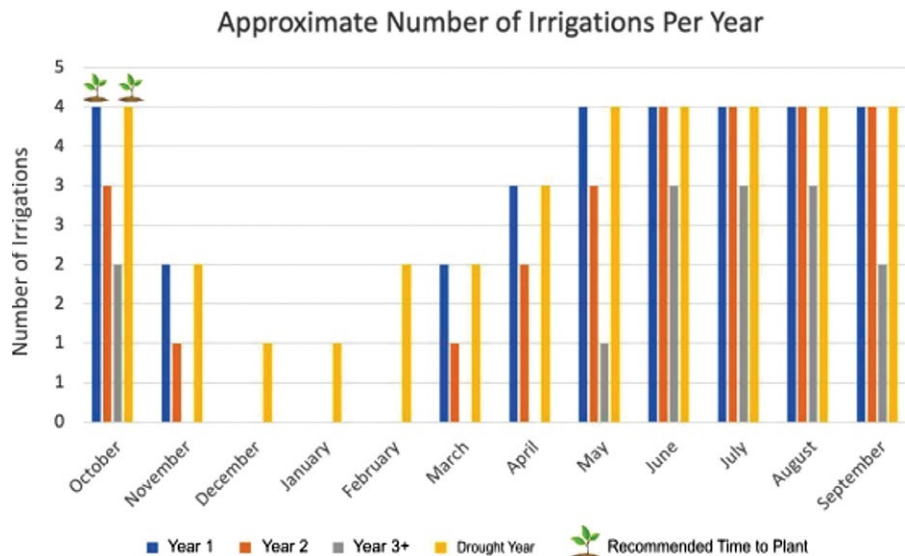
The species recommended for pollinator habitat are native to the Central Valley of California and have evolved to tolerate dry and hot climates. However, installing irrigation dramatically increases the chance of successful establishment, particularly during drought years. Irrigate during the non-rainy months (May - September) for the first two or three years. If experiencing drought, irrigation will also be required during the rainy season (November - April). It should be noted that the first year, and especially the first six months, poses the highest risk for plant survival. The root zone of specimens planted in the fall should remain moist until seasonal rains occur. Once plants reach maturity, adequate irrigation can range from as little as one to three times per month during the dry season (May - September) and zero times per month during the rainy season. The frequency will vary depending on soil types. The following chart serves as a general guideline for how many irrigation events are necessary.



## IN YOUR ORCHARD

At no point during the year should any of these sites have standing water. Species like California lilac (*Ceanothus spp.*), flannel bush (*Fremontodendron californicum*), manzanita (*Arctostaphylos manzanita*), and silver lupine (*Lupinus albifrons*) are notoriously susceptible to overwatering. Drought-tolerant species will not do well if overwatering occurs during the summer; it will likely kill them. Different soil conditions can affect the necessary duration of each irrigation. The normal range is for five to fifteen

hours during each irrigation event depending on the flow rate of drip emitters. Land managers throughout the Valley have achieved success with emitters ranging from half a gallon to two gallons per hour. If runoff is a concern in soils with high clay content, it is advisable to switch to shorter irrigation times. Run the water until the area is saturated but does not run off. Sandy soils may never appear completely saturated so beware of over-irrigating in these situations.



		YEAR 1												YEAR 2												YEAR 3											
		M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D		
Phase 1	Site Preparation/Existing Vegetation Removal																																				
	Mow and/or Remove Vegetation																																				
	Site Wide Broad Spectrum Herbicide Applications																																				
	Grass Selective Herbicide Applications on Seeded Area																																				
	Install Irrigation																																				
Phase 2	Habitat Installation																																				
	Install Hedgerow																																				
Phase 3	Plant Establishment and Assessment																																				
	Irrigation (if needed)																																				
	Plant Monitoring																																				
	Spot Spray Herbicide																																				

Need funding to establish hedgerow? Visit [pollinator.org/ag-grants](http://pollinator.org/ag-grants). We have programs to help!

Have additional questions about establishing your hedgerow? Contact [bff@pollinator.org](mailto:bff@pollinator.org) – we have answers!

## Next Steps

Once you have established your pollinator habitat features within your orchard, it is time to apply to join the Bee Friendly Farming (BFF) program. BFF is a certification program from Pollinator Partnership working with growers to help protect, preserve, and promote pollinator health. BFF provides guidelines for growers to promote pollinator health on their lands by helping growers incorporate affordable, simple, science-based guidelines, like offering nutrition and habitats for bees, and integrated pest management strategies. By becoming a Bee Friendly Farming member, you can help preserve and protect the pollinator populations by implementing positive, incremental changes on your property. Program members are an essential part of keeping our pollinators healthy and our food supply abundant. The criteria for obtaining BFF certification are as follows:

1. Offer nutritious forage for bees on at least 3% of cropped acreage. Forage can be temporary and can include cover crops if they are left to bloom.
2. Provide bloom of different flowering plants throughout the growing season from early spring to late autumn. There is no minimum land coverage for seasonal bloom.
3. Provide permanent habitat for nesting through features such as hedgerows, natural brush, buffer strips, or bare ground. Attempt to have at least 1% perennial habitat.
4. Offer clean water for bees if not inhibited by government-mandated water restrictions.

5. Utilize Integrated Pest Management (IPM) in effort to reduce or eliminate the use of chemicals.

Do you meet the BFF certification criteria? Now is the perfect time to apply to BFF. To learn more, visit: [pollinator.org/bff/bff-us](http://pollinator.org/bff/bff-us) or contact [bff@pollinator.org](mailto:bff@pollinator.org). Create an account and apply by visiting [pollinator.org/bff-cert/apply](http://pollinator.org/bff-cert/apply). If you already have an account, select "Continue an Existing Application" and log in. We would love to celebrate your pollinator habitat and welcome you to the BFF community! ♦



**Cody Wilson**  
Agricultural Specialist  
Pollinator Partnership

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### THE ALMOND BOARD

## 2024 State of the Almond Industry: Well-Positioned for Growth

The true resilience of California almond growers has shined through over the last few years of hardship and fortunately, with this crop year, growers are finally seeing favorable changes.

This year's 52nd Annual Almond Conference — held at the SAFE Credit Union Convention Center in Sacramento, CA, December 10-12 — was a positive indication that the collective grassroots efforts of growers, industry members, and the Almond Board of California (ABC), are working to create growth, opportunity and optimism for California almonds.

"The board, our committees, and our team at the Almond Board are very focused on our four strategic priorities that we established earlier this year: Driving global demand, supporting a favorable trade and regulatory environment, maximizing our industry's value and optimizing the Almond Board's value," said Clarice Turner, President and CEO of ABC, at the State of the Industry address.



Clarice Turner SOTI 2024

### Today's Economic Landscape

While the industry is not out of the woods yet, there are tangible signs that healthy demand is on the rise. Last crop year, the industry sold 300 million pounds more than what was produced. Carryout levels are below 500 million pounds, a number that hasn't been seen since 2019.

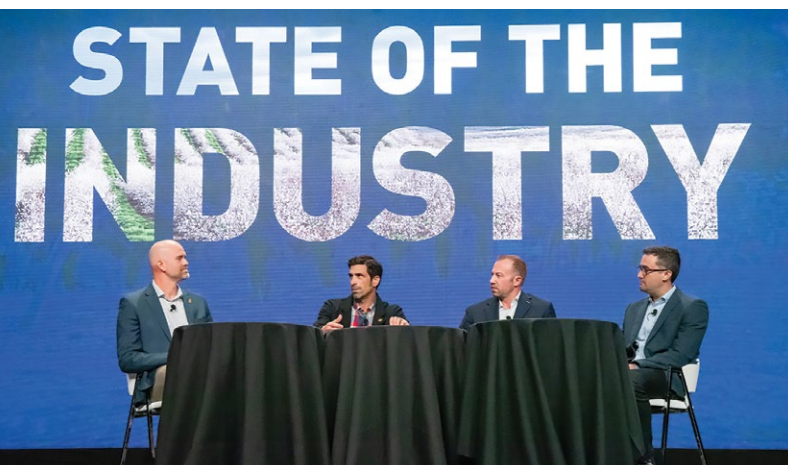
Coming into 2025, the economic landscape is expected to change, especially as a new administration took charge

in January. Scott Clemons, Partner and Chief Investment Strategist at Brown Brothers Harriman, discussed some of these changes, forecasting that personal spending, trade and tariff policies, immigration policies, and interest rates will all have an impact on the almond industry.

### Market Conditions

While demand is looking up, almond acreage is declining. On trend with recent years, the 2024 Land IQ Acreage Report (<https://bit.ly/3E1OYam>) indicated that non-bearing and total almond acreage has decreased for the third year in a row. Regionally, fewer almonds are being harvested from the South Valley, which is typically where the strongest yields have been, and production is shifting north.

That said, the almond industry is seeing growing returns this crop year and is still well-positioned to grow in the future. That's because the balance of supply and demand has recovered.



SOTI 2024 Panel with Bryce Spycher

"This shift was largely driven by annual shipments exceeding annual receipts for the first time in five years," said Neil Zacky of Derco Foods. "With larger inventories in California and increased global production, overseas buyers adopted a hand to mouth purchasing strategy."

This new strategy meant buyers delayed their purchase of almonds for as long as possible, hoping to receive better pricing. Carryover also dropped slightly below historical averages, much of which was lower quality.

Because of this and reduced inventory numbers, buyers were quick to purchase the new crop and for longer periods of time, help rebuild a healthy supply chain.

### Fostering Relationships on the Trade Front

Despite disruptions in the geopolitical space, overall, demand remained optimistic. Within the first three reporting months of the crop year, shipments increased by 41% in the Middle East and 36% in Southeast Asia.

Keeping strong relationships with these markets and others who have trade and technical issues has been one of the key priorities of ABC's agenda this year. Staff and committee members recently developed a global trade strategy, focused on leveraging relationships with international industry partners and providing necessary data for policy makers to make informed decisions.

To bring growers into the conversation, ABC organized a Washington D.C. delegation (<https://bit.ly/40MJSXh>), made up of farmers and individuals who are directly affected by the decisions made by government and legislative officials.



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Brandon Rebiero, ABC Director and almond grower, was one of the farmers who participated and noted the value of having discussions with D.C. representatives on what is happening in the field.

"We're just one of many crop organizations trying to get a foot in the door, so we have to do whatever we can to differentiate ourselves," Rebiero explained. "We do that by having sound data and good relationships that last a while."

### Telling Our Stewardship Story

Just like the policy space, consumers make their decisions based on the information they have, so now more than ever, ABC is emphasizing the importance of telling the industry's environmental stewardship story.

Excessive water use for growing almonds continues to be a misconception the industry is combating today, but ABC is increasing messaging to explain that every drop creates four crops: kernel, shell, hull and woody biomass.



Additionally, trees are a huge contributor to the industry's positive carbon footprint, which is another significant piece to stewardship.

"Our trees collectively have already captured 30 million metric tons of carbon in this state. That's like taking 24 million cars — all the passenger cars in California, Oregon, Washington, and Texas combined — off the road," says Turner.

Data shows that consumers find environmental stewardship to be an important value proposition in their eating experience. Josette Lewis, Chief Scientific Officer at ABC said many brands, including California almonds, are latching onto that.

"Sixty percent of the new products that were introduced in the last year had environmental messaging as part of them," Lewis said. "We have a great story to tell about the work that you do in your orchards."

### Expanding Innovation and Marketing Program

Between its sustainability benefits and versatility in new food products, almonds have immense potential within the food innovation space. In fact, in 2023, almond ingredients were included in 14,000 new food products.

Seeing that, ABC is investing in ways to continue keeping almonds top of mind for food industry experts. They've partnered up with chefs, high schools, colleges, and the Culinary Institute of America to explore new opportunities and are capitalizing on the incredible health benefits of almonds (<https://bit.ly/40qoqHg>), which remains the number one reason why consumers eat almonds.

ABC, in collaboration with the Almond Alliance, also scored a win for the industry (<https://bit.ly/40GVrQQ>) by getting almond products included in the guidelines for the Women, Infants, and Children program (WIC), serving over 6 million people every month.

At last year's conference, ABC introduced a study it had been working on with Deloitte Consulting to assess emerging markets and determine a clear vision forward for target markets. The project evaluated over 100 countries, narrowed down to 11 key markets, and

eventually concluded that the industry should double down on core markets like the U.S. and India, especially after seeing 21% growth in India over the last year.

India was already in ABC's portfolio, but Deloitte's feedback provided more details on why there must be a deeper investment within their younger demographic (<https://bit.ly/4hq4pav>), since 65% of India's population is under 35.

The study also emphasized developing a long-term growth plan for emerging markets including Turkey (<https://bit.ly/3EiOnko>), Morocco, and Indonesia, and staff has been working to understand these countries and assess what resonates with those audiences.

One marketing program that has seen consistent return on investment is the Own Your Prime campaign, now in its second year. ABC's partnership with former NFL star Deion Sanders (<https://bit.ly/40uoHJ6>), also known as Coach Prime, has performed exceedingly well. As Coach Prime's presence gains more traction in mainstream media, so do California almonds.

"He delivered 10 times greater media impressions than any previous ABC spokesperson," said Emily Fleischmann, Vice President, Global Market Development at ABC. "We've seen this turn into consumer action. An in-store promotion with Kroger (<https://bit.ly/4ap5htX>), which is the second largest retail chain in the nation, had a 42% increase in new buyers."

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*—Clarice Turner, President & CEO, ABC*

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Other opportunities ABC continues to seek out are places they can reach large and growing audiences like China's T-MALL and online gaming. Starting this spring, they are also collaborating with Smoothie King. As the largest smoothie chain in the world, customers will be encouraged to add almond products to their smoothies to help with muscle recovery, based on exciting new research (<https://bit.ly/4arFlhg>) indicating almonds reduce pain and muscle damage post-exercise.

### Staying Competitive

Turner noted that for 170 years, the almond industry has proved its tenacity and adaptability. It's clear that challenges are inevitable, so looking ahead, creativity and resourcefulness will be essential. Fortunately, ABC is equipped with valuable data to provide resources to growers and ensure almond farming remains a rewarding venture for years to come.

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*“I firmly believe that we have the right product in the right place at the right time, and we are well positioned to grow demand around the world for California almonds with new products, new markets, new innovations and new partnerships.”*

—Clarice Turner, President & CEO, ABC

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“I firmly believe that we have the right product in the right place at the right time, and we are well positioned to grow demand around the world for California almonds with new products, new markets, new innovations and new partnerships,” Turner concluded.

Article contributed by the Almond Board of California ♦

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## Alicia Rockwell New Board Chair for the Almond Board of California



The Almond Board of California's Board of Directors elected Alicia Rockwell to be the new Chair of the Board. Rockwell took over the role on January 1 from Alexi Rodriguez, who began a new role of her own

on January 1 as CEO of the Almond Alliance.

Rockwell is the Chief Government and Public Affairs Officer for *Blue Diamond Growers*. Brandon Rebiero, a co-founder of *Gold Leaf Farming*, was elected the Board's Vice Chair.

“I'm honored to have the trust of my fellow board members,” said Rockwell. “The Board is a strong group of experienced

and impressive individuals who care deeply about our industry. Together, we will continue to address industry challenges and build a prosperous future for the California almond industry.”

The ABC Board sets policy and approves budgets in major areas, including global market development, production research, public relations and advertising, nutrition research, statistical reporting, quality control and food safety.

ABC is a Federal Marketing Order dedicated to promoting California almonds to domestic and international audiences through marketing efforts and by funding, ensuring food safety and promoting studies about almonds' health benefits and state of the art agricultural practices to aid growers and to further the industry's efforts in environmental stewardship.

Article contributed by the Almond Board of California ♦



## TIME TO CONSIDER

Happy New Year! 2025 is here and while it may be a new year, growers will still be dealing with the same problems as bloom approaches: how to handle almond diseases throughout bloom. Disease in almonds can sneak up on growers, and once it starts it is almost impossible to stop. I will be discussing a few common diseases that present themselves during bloom and what you can do to prevent them. I am also going to talk about bees and how you can set yourself up for successful pollination.

Being prepared for a weather event is critical to the success of a fungicide application. The first spring disease that usually pops into people's minds is **brown rot**. The disease does need moisture, but not much. Brown rot can be present with little to no rain because there is moisture present in the flower itself and even the morning dew can set us up for a problem.

The next disease that I've seen become a little more prevalent in my area is **jacket rot/green fruit rot**. This disease, like many others, must have the right conditions to be present. Jacket rot usually appears later in bloom when the fungus affects the dropping petals, jackets, or other flower parts and because of the moisture, they stick to the young almonds. It is most prominent in dense clusters of almonds because the falling plant material gets trapped in the cluster and can lead to infection of the whole cluster.

**Shot hole** is another common springtime disease but has become less of an issue over the years. It is usually easy to discover as it develops small, reddish spots on the leaves, and typically has a dark spot in the center. These lesions can show up on other parts of the plant, but most people discover it on the leaves. Jim Adaskaveg, a leading plant pathologist at UC Riverside says shot hole "hasn't been much of an issue over the past decade or longer, however, in large part because fungicides used to control other diseases have kept it at bay."

The last bloom time disease I would like to shine light on is **anthracnose**. Like the other diseases, anthracnose is

dependent on environmental conditions. Heavy moisture or rain along with warmer temperatures will lead to the development of the disease. Symptoms appear as blossom blight, fruit infections, spur and limb dieback. Anthracnose is not a disease you want gaining a foothold in your orchard. It can have a multiple-year effect because of the infection to spurs and limbs. Growers may have to prune out the infection, in combination with a strong fungicide program to eradicate it.

The diseases that cause growers so many headaches at bloom have been identified, but how do we control them? There are quite a few fungicides that growers can choose from. The main thing to keep in mind is to pick the correct fungicide for the disease you are trying to prevent and the correct timing of when to apply the fungicide. In Figure 1, you will see a chart of different diseases and application timing. The chart is on a 0-3 scale with 0 being ineffective and 3 being most effective. This can help you target past disease issues. For example, if a grower has had a history of high jacket rot infection, that grower can look at this chart and know he/she needs protection at the full bloom timing.

Now that we know when to target a specific disease, how do we know which product to use? The UC Agriculture and Natural Resources IPM website has a great chart for this. Fungicide Efficacy—Conventional Products / Almond / Agriculture: Pest Management Guidelines / UC Statewide IPM Program (UC IPM) (<https://bit.ly/3PNEf5U>) The Almond Fungicide Efficacy Chart lists multiple products and the FRAC group associated with that fungicide. What is a FRAC group? FRAC stands for "Fungicide Resistance Action Committee" and it is a set of numbers and letters to distinguish fungicides based on their mode of action. To prevent resistance to these fungicides, growers need to rotate FRAC groups to prevent developing resistant disease. That means if a grower's first bloom spray contains a FRAC Group 3 fungicide, the second bloom spray application should not. The second should contain a different mode of action like a FRAC Group 7/11. By rotating FRAC groups it keeps tools in your toolbox. Growers have enough tools

		Bloom			Spring <sup>1</sup>		Summer	
Disease	Dormant	Pink bud	Full bloom	Petal fall	2 weeks	5 weeks	May	June/July
alternaria	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	3
anthracnose <sup>2</sup>	0	2	3	3	3	3	3	2
bacterial spot	1	0	2	3	3	2	1	0
brown rot	0	2	3	1	0	0	0	0
green fruit rot	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	0
hull rot <sup>7</sup>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
leaf blight	0	0	3	2	1	0	0	0
rust	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	1 <sup>6</sup>
scab <sup>3</sup>	2	0	0	2	3	3	1	0
shot hole <sup>4</sup>	1 <sup>5</sup>	1	2	3	3	2	0	0

Figure 1: UC Davis IPM

removed by outside forces, so they do not need to remove their own.

Pollination may be the single most critical step in the year for a successful almond crop. That success is highly dependent on the bees that are in your orchard. There are a few factors that can affect the success of your almond pollination. First, is the number of frames. A single eight-frame hive will collect 2.5 times more pollen

than a four-frame hive. The contract with your beekeeper should state the strength of the hives, so you know what you should be receiving. Second, is hive placement. You want to avoid placing hives in areas of high traffic, shade, or placed in a single area. Place hives no more than a quarter mile apart, where the morning sun can warm the hive quickly. Third, is water. Bees will look for water and if they cannot find it, they will leave your orchard to search for it. Bee buckets, as shown in Figure 2, are perfect to place next to hives to keep the bees hydrated. Lastly, are spray applications. Growers all know to not use insecticides during bloom, but a fungicide application will likely be needed. The key things to remember are to apply late in the day and evening while bees are back in the hives, remove or cover any water sources, and of course, do not

spray the hives directly. If you want more tips for bees, please check the California Almond Board website for best management practices.

Proper planning will almost always set you up for success. The best way to prevent disease is to be prepared for it, and using the tools mentioned can help you do just that. The same goes for pollination. Proper planning will put your orchard, and investment in bees, in the best position for success. With all the talking points about how to have a successful plan, let's hope for a successful start to the 2025 season. ♦



Figure 2 Bee Bucket. Photo credit: Ben Goudie



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