

GATHERING THE CROP

The dog days of August came upon us once again, signaling the time was ripe to gather in our 2016 crop of almonds. In the first days of August we harvested the Nonpareil variety, and the Monterey and Fritz varieties were harvested together in the beginning of September. Like the previous year, we harvested onto tarps using a hydro-mechanical shaker. Since the middle of October, this year's Nonpareil almonds have been for sale on the website. Our huller and sheller facility is behind-schedule, so the Monterey and Fritz varieties will follow in November. We apologize for this unexpected delay.



Harvesting one of the old, original trees; their height is one reason why they are no longer planted.

In addition to the new crop on our website, we are adding a new product: variety packs. The variety packs come in seven different options on the website, but you are always welcome to call or email in a more specialized, customized order. Each pack is a different combination of raw almonds, smoked almonds, and raw almond butter. They are perfect for customers looking for a specific combination of each product or as a gift to a friend. Hopefully they will help you easily choose exactly the combination of products you desire. Considering the drought and a recent decrease in local bee population, our orchard has been performing comparatively well. This year's yield is slightly less than last year, but it is by no means a small yield. We have been keeping record of all soil and foliage tests as well, and they show we have been caring well for our trees. Much of our tree's well-being depends on the weather, of course. As of this date, we have received about one inch of rain, which is more than the previous two years' accumulation (0" and 1/4", respectively). However, the rainy season is only beginning, so we have yet to see what the rest of the season will hold. Every day we pray that this drought will end.

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FRUGAL FARMING: SHOPPING AROUND

As mentioned in the previous newsletter, "Frugal Farming" is a continuing series of articles about how we try to save money in orchard operations and overhead so we can keep prices as low as possible. Elaine Paddock (Brian's mother) taught him always to shop around for the best price for the best quality. Some people see this emphasis on searching for the best price as being "cheap", but it is not; rather, it is being economical and prudent. We think it is worth the time to locate quality, long-lasting products at a fair price. Therefore, we spend hours searching for the right price on various products: storage boxes, plastic bags, irrigation equipment, soil amendments, etc. In addition, we try to purchase in large quantities in order to optimize the value. The Internet helps us locate great value, which is sometimes across the country or sometimes right in our local area and we never knew about it. It is amazing how much you can save by shopping around, but of course you do need to be careful and ensure you are still getting the quality and components you want and expect of the product.

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Top to bottom: Talking about our harvest process, Gretchen with our Nonpareil yield; the CBS interview.

THE RESULTS ARE IN!

It has now been one year since we inoculated our cover crop seeds with the natural, beneficial fungi called mycorrhizae (see the 2015 newsletter, Q3). The purpose of the mycorrhizal fungi was to increase the surface-area of the root systems of the cover crop plants (via the extensions of the fungi from the roots). These extensions would grow to attach themselves to the tree roots, and it would consequently increase the trees' capacity to find and absorb water and nutrients, decreasing the amount of stress placed on a tree during drier times. In May, two UC Davis research scientists tested our soil and our neighbor's soil (in a conventional almond orchard) for results from the mycorrhizae addition. They then compared our sample results with sample results from several organic and conventional orchards around California. We were pleased to learn that our "cover crop inoculation resulted in a 21% increase in colonization rates compared to 2015" (Amelie Gaudin, "Re: Researcher looking for soil samples from organic almond orchard"). Out of all the orchards tested (both conventional and organic), our soil and tree roots tested higher than all others, with a 85% colonization rate. This is certainly an encouraging result, and we hope that the mycorrhizal inoculation will continue to benefit our trees. The final results of this research project will be presented at the annual Almond Conference in Sacramento on Dec 6-8, 2016.



TODAY IN THE NEWS ...

We're famous! Almost a year ago, we were awarded the use of the Homegrown by Heroes label by the Farmer Veteran Coalition. The Farmer Veteran Coalition is an organization formed in 2007 that guides and helps veterans to turn their energies and talents to farming. We applied for a grant from the Coalition, and in early October, we received the grant, which enabled us to buy our own chipper (in order to chip the tree clippings in the winter). The Farmer Veteran Coalition receives much of their funding from a marketing food broker called Prairie Grove Farms, which sells exclusively to Raley's, a family-owned supermarket chain in Northern California. Recently, they had a media event where Raley's and Prairie Grove was awarding the Coalition a check for \$50,000. They asked Brian if he would be the farmer-representative at the event. KCRA, a major news and weather station in Northern California, was at the event, as was a CBS station. After Brian's short speech, KOVR (the CBS station) requested an additional interview with him and the Farmer Veteran Coalition at our orchard. The interview—turned into a well-constructed news story—was on the evening news later that day.

Brian really enjoyed getting to participate in this event and then sharing our orchard's story more in-depth with the CBS news team. We are including a link to the news clip so you may enjoy it also: <https://vimeo.com/186498980>. This link, as well as the link of the media event (with Brian's speech), is also posted on our Facebook page. Come check them out!

