

## DO THE SHAKE! THE MUMMY SHAKE!

Do you know the Monster Mash song? Well, this past fall the Almond Board of California decided to create its own mix-up of the song and called it the Mummy Shake, promoting the orchard health practice of knocking old season almonds off the trees. They held a state-wide contest, inviting all involved in the almond industry to create a video featuring the “mummy shake” song. We found out about the contest just before the submittal date, so we hurried out to the orchard and compiled our own submission as quickly as we could! Unfortunately we did not end up winning (the prize was a trip to Disney Land!) but Brian and Alicia did get to attend the Almond Board of California Conference and luncheon (more on that trip in the next article) as a part of the contest. Please check out our mummy shake video on our [Capay Hills Orchard Facebook](#) page or using the hashtag #MummyShake.

Let us explain a bit more about mummies and the annual “mummy shake.” Not every almond falls off the tree during harvest, and these nuts eventually blacken and become the perfect homes for the navel orange worm. Prevention of pests is always preferred to the eradication of pests, especially for organic farmers who want to farm in a sustainable method and therefore have fewer options when it comes to pest control. Thus the Almond Board of California is encouraging farmers to knock or shake the mummy nuts off the trees in the late fall or early winter to prevent the navel orange worms from overwintering and laying their eggs in the mummies, to emerge in the spring to feed on the newly forming almonds. We knock mummies the old-fashioned way—by hand with a long pole. It is tedious work and it sure does make your neck ache from staring up at the tree branches, but this prevention practice is invaluable in eradicating the habitat for this pest. After knocking mummies we do a light rototill of the orchard floor to destroy the mummies and to prepare the soil for the sowing of our cover crop. Check out this link for some more info on mummies and the navel orange worm: <https://www2.ipm.ucanr.edu/agriculture/pistachio/Navel-Orangeworm/>.

### NOVEMBER - JANUARY

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### ABC ...

In early December, Brian and Alicia were given the opportunity to attend the annual Almond Board of California Conference and luncheon as special guests of the Almond Board of California (ABC) (since we were contestants in their #MummyShake contest). There was a wide variety of things to see, from research projects and new harvesting technology to some of the business we buy products from, including Sierra Gold Trees and Converted Organics, and Project Apis m, a nonprofit we partner with. Perhaps the displays we found the most interesting were a mechanical sorter and new harvesting machines that eliminate a tremendous amount of the dust created by current harvesting machines. During the luncheon we sat with the other contestants, as well as representatives from the ABC and the entertainment for the meal—the Peterson Brothers, all the way from Kansas. They make parodies of popular songs and turn them into tools to educate people about farming. You should check them out on YouTube. They’re great to watch! So even though our Mummy Shake video did not win, everyone loved watching it and it was a fun way to help educate people on the importance of the “mummy shake.”

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Top to bottom: Scene from our "mummy shake" video; Brian and Alicia meeting the Peterson Brothers; Brian and Gretchen with a tree in full bloom; the family standing with our not-yet-planted orchard 10 years ago.

## RAIN, RAIN, GO AWAY

Good news! We are getting rain and lots of it! We are almost getting too much rain, if that can actually happen in California. Our first rain came a few days before Thanksgiving and it has rained every few days to two weeks since then. Our rain total for the season (which runs from July to July) is just under 23 inches. Last year we had less than 10 inches for the whole season and our season average is around 20 inches, so we are getting a great amount of rain for the growth of our trees and their almonds. Last year at this time we only had 5.5 inches! The constantly waterlogged ground has caused some minor temporary issues with flooding and lack of access to the orchard but overall it has been a blessing. Each rain storm comes with several rainbows (some of them double or triple rainbows), too, so the gray, soggy days end promisingly with sunshine and color!



This year we are also approaching our chill requirement hours (300-600 hours below 45 degrees), though we are missing the weeks of 60-70 degree weather we usually have scattered throughout the winter. This week is sunnier than we have had yet this winter but the daytime high temperatures for the week will stay below 55 degrees. This lack of warm sunny days is causing our almond bloom to be a tad later this year, but that does not give us any cause for concern at all. On January 29 our IXL variety trees (remnants of the old 1916 orchard planted on the property) produced their first blossom, meaning that the rest of our trees would bloom in two weeks!



## MEET THE FARMER'S WIFE: GRETCHEN

"Behind every successful man there is a woman." This phrase could not be truer when it comes to my mom, Gretchen. We joke that she runs the nut farm! My mom has always supported my dad with the orchard business, even though the initial thought of farming and starting a business was certainly daunting! She has always seen the farm as being full of opportunities for the family to learn and work together, which we definitely did a lot of. Gretchen graduated from UC Davis in 1987 with a degree in sociology and obtained her teacher's license in Texas while my dad was in flight training for the USAF. She taught in Texas and South Carolina and after moving back to California and starting a family, she started homeschooling. She homeschooled all six of us kids from kindergarten through the twelfth grade. She has not worked for pay in 28 years, but she has sent three students through college very successfully, currently is a college counselor for my sister in college, and still teaches the two youngest at home. Additionally, she is in the choir at church, volunteers with an adult literacy program, serves on the board at our local library, and volunteers with our local soccer program. Did I forget to say that she somehow manages to keep the house clean and family life running smoothly? Her least favorite orchard job is gleaning (that's everyone's least favorite job) and favorite job was planting the trees.