
NOTES FROM THE NUT

CAPAY HILLS ORCHARD NEWSLETTER ISSUE 36

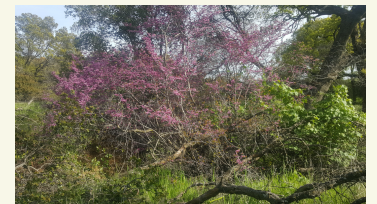


IN THIS ISSUE: FEBRUARY - APRIL 2023

- Bees Are the Key
- What to Eat Before You Eat



Bees Are the Key



It's a well-known fact that bees, and pollination in general, are a necessary element to growing any crop. Although other pollinators (such as birds, beetles, bats, and the wind) exist, bees are effectively the only pollination method for almond blossoms. They are very effective and efficient method of pollination, since most almond varieties require cross-pollination. Every almond farmer relies on bees. In addition, almond pollen is also very healthy for the bees themselves. Due to a puzzling recent decline in bee colony populations (stemming from mites, predators, bad weather, and disease), more and more research is being poured into studying the factors involved in bee health, which, of course, leads to increased almond production. Additionally, new, self-fertile varieties of almonds (such as Independence and Shasta) are now being propagated, but their yield is still directly related to bee activity.

Perhaps the action with the greatest impact on bees that a farmer can do is to plant a cover crop and a hedgerow of native plants. At Capay Hills Orchard, we have a hedgerow on three sides of our orchard, and a cover crop throughout each spring. We always have something in bloom for the bees. We now see cover crops in more and more orchards, particularly almond orchards. These cover crops are still mostly found on organic farms, but even

conventional farmers are starting to gain a better understanding of the importance of building up soil structure and integrity for the health of the orchard and even the ecosystem as a whole. The key factor in a cover crop is that it be made up of vegetation that is nitrogen-fixing, that is, it captures nitrogen in the air and converts it into a form that is "fixed" into the soil and readily usable for plant growth. While the exact mixture generally varies from year to year, our cover crop usually contains mustard, vetch, clover, radishes, and peas.

Of course, having such an expanded bloom period is excellent for the bees, but this still only works if we have good weather. If it is too cold (in the 40s or 50s), too wet, or too windy, the bees won't come out and our crop doesn't get pollinated. This spring we had a lot of poor weather during our bloom period, so we and other farmers are anxiously watching our crop develop to see what remains viable. That's the life of a farmer! You never know what the weather will bring you!



What to Eat Before You Eat



The Almond Board of California recently published an [article](#) that provides a very interesting and hopeful read for many people across the world, but especially for those of us in the U.S. where diabetes and prediabetes are rapidly growing numbers. A frightening 10% of Americans are dealing with diabetes or prediabetes. Non-Hispanic white populations are the least severely-affected population; minority and Hispanic populations encounter this blood sugar disorder in greater proportions. Since the coronavirus epidemic, we have learned that (according to the CDC), nearly 40% of all adults who died from covid in the United States also had diabetes. That is a truly alarming number! Yet this article, written about a study done on Asian Indians in India (who are disproportionately more likely to progress from prediabetes to diabetes), offers some hope for those who struggle with prediabetes or diabetes. And thankfully, this hope comes in a very simple form: almonds.

Yes, the study conducted on two groups of Asian Indians found that blood sugar levels dropped significantly after only three days (there was also a three-month trial group) of eating 0.7 ounces (20 grams, which is approximately 16 almonds, or a small handful) 30 minutes prior to breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Within three months, 25% of the 30-member group actually *reversed* their prediabetes status. That's a very significant statistic!

' Researchers expressed their enthusiasm for these almond studies and the first-of-its-kind statistically significant reduction in measures of prediabetes by calling the reversal of prediabetes through diet "the holy grail of medicine." We are hopeful that this will only be the first of many similar studies conducted to determine ways in which, through a simple, natural diet, diabetes can be prevented and prediabetes reversed in greater numbers. It makes perfect sense, really. The publication concluded by summarizing the general nutritional information of almonds: "A one-ounce (28 g) serving of almonds provides 4 g (14% DV) fiber and 15 essential nutrients, including: 77 mg (20% DV) magnesium, 210 mg (4% DV) potassium, and 7.27 mg (50% DV) vitamin E, making them a perfect nutrient-rich snack for those with impaired glucose tolerance or type 2 diabetes." The idea behind the science is that "the natural combination of monounsaturated fatty acids and soluble fiber could be responsible for the positive metabolic outcomes." The fiber slows the digestion, which could help people ingest fewer calories during their normal meal times. This is why almonds also make for a great snack throughout the day, staving off food cravings for longer periods of time. Whether or not you struggle with prediabetes or diabetes, almonds are clearly a great way to keep your body healthy and happy! We've got you covered!

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