

season update

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WESTERN AUSTRALIA – SEPTEMBER 2006 REPORT

Climate

Average spring conditions have generally been experienced in most areas. Overnight and daytime temperatures have been slightly higher in some areas and rainfall lower than average in southern districts. Evaporation rates have been average in most areas. This is a taxing time of year for irrigation scheduling, monitor irrigation requirements closely as this is critical for nutrient uptake.

Phenology

All varieties had passed bud break early in the month and early and mid season varieties started to flower mid to late in the month. Fertiliser programs should be well underway to support the high nutrient demand period of flowering.

Production

Harvest of Hickson mandarins finished towards the end of the month along with mid season navels (mainly Washington). Harvest of late season navels and Honey Murcott mandarins started mid month along with Mystique mandarins (in the Harvey area). Red Flesh Grapefruit harvest started towards the end of the month in the Bindoon area. Ellendale mandarins also started towards the end of the month in the Harvey area. White Flesh Grapefruit harvest started in late August in the Burekup area, with sugar acid ratios a little lower than recommended.

Fruit splitting continues to be a problem in some navel varieties as does Albedo breakdown.

General Management

Now is a good time to soil test. If sampling at two depths per site take samples from 0-15 cm and 15-30cm. Plan to prune each tree every second or third year to improve tree structure, commencing after harvest. The best time to spray weeds is when they are small, get on top of weeds if you haven't already.

Pests and Diseases

Monitor & Plan: As spring warms up beneficial insects will start appearing. Aphids and fruit fly will also start to appear. If controlling aphids only spray the growth flushes and keep an eye out for fruit fly in ripening fruit. If scale is an issue in the orchard consider ordering red scale parasites – *Aphytis melinus* for southwest WA and *Aphytis lignanesis* for northern WA for release in October. Monitor snail activity and bait and apply copper sprays where necessary.

Source: Helen Ramsey, WA Department of Agriculture