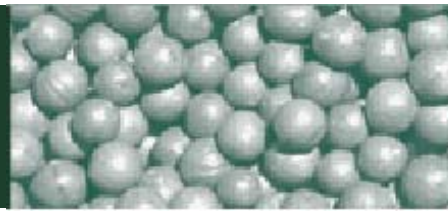
PACIFIC PLANTATIONS
Grower News



From the Field – Monitoring season end notes

The season commenced with an outstanding flowering throughout the region. What appeared to be a possible record breaking year ahead was washed out with untimely heavy rainfall. Flowers remained in the trees as dried reddish brown arrangements for some time until the inevitable fungus known as botrytis emerged to feed on the dead cell material. However as the regional flowering was initially very heavy, the rainfall had only decreased the potential yield to an overall season average.

As the set began to emerge, growers were eagerly awaiting to estimate the set when the majority of nut was at match head size so as to commence their fungal containment spraying program. Judging the appropriate time for the first fungicide application is not an easy task with irregular nut size settings. Your IPM consultant being familiar with the progress of macadamia crops provided valuable assistance in timing the fungicide treatment. Growers that utilized the IPM service applied fungicide only twice, once at match head size and the other at pea size. As a result, the amount of huskspot affected nut in their orchards had been dramatically decreased. The dry weather also had an effect lowering huskspot levels. It was noted that orchards not using an IPM strategy, and applied their first huskspot prevention at later stages than pea size did not show an obvious decline in affected nut.

Flower and hairy caterpillar was not a concern this season. The natural reduction of these insect numbers was made up with the sap sucking fruit spotting bug and the devastating lacebug that had spread rapidly in parts of the region. The fruit spotter was the most persistent of insects this season as it returned post spraying. Although initial sprayings were very effective in containing the insect it returned in numbers of similar magnitude. The IPM service was focused on the fruit spotter re-infestation and second sprayings were executed accordingly.

Why did the fruit spotting bug return so quickly to orchards after spraying? This is explained with the amount of flowering that eventuated this season. It wasn't only the macadamia that originally produced excessive amounts of flower, any plant native and non-native that was capable of producing a berry did so this season. This was noticeable amongst vegetation adjoining orchards ranging from the Davidson plum to the tobacco bush holding heavy crops.

Nutborer wasn't so dramatic this season mainly because the summer heat was late to eventuate. Conditions for nutborer activity had been delayed due to the lack of heat and it had snowed in the south of the state prior to Christmas. Growers using IPM were instructed to spray for nut borer in December which provided adequate protection for the season. Maturity in tree nut in most orchards will eventuate approximately mid March and a quality crop is expected particularly from those growers that utilised the IPM service.

Ian Wilson
Technical Consultant
Pacific Plantations