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Citrus psorosis

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CAREFUL selection of propagating material will prevent the spread of citrus psorosis, a disease which reduces the yield and economic life of infected trees.

Psorosis (Scaly Bark) is a disease of world-wide occurrence on citrus trees and has been responsible for considerable losses to orchardists in some citrus countries.

In Western Australia, it has been present for many years but has so far only occurred on occasional trees in most orchards. In one or two cases, up to 10 per cent. of mature Navel orange trees have been found affected. The danger in Western Australia is not therefore in the existing number of affected trees, but in the possibility of propagating from such trees in the future and thus spreading the disease.

SYMPTOMS

On the leaves, pale flecks and line patterns may occur, but these are rarely seen because they are inconspicuous and only appear for a very short time on young growth in spring or autumn.

The disease is seen mainly as a scaling and lifting or curling of the bark (Fig. 1),
when trees are approximately 12 or more years old. This condition is found mainly on the trunk, but may extend up the main limbs (Fig. 2). Scaling may involve relatively large pieces of bark or pieces as small as one inch in diameter. Gum may sometimes be associated with scaling of the bark. Affected trees decline in growth and yield with a dieback of branches, and may linger for some years before finally dying out.

CAUSE

Psorosis is caused by a virus which is spread from tree to tree in buds and grafts taken from infected parents for propagation purposes. There is no known natural method of transmission in orchards.

CONTROL

There is no spray treatment or surgical treatment which will cure a tree which is affected with Psorosis. Nor is there anything to be gained by reworking such trees, as the virus will spread into the new scion.

Propagating material should not be taken from a tree showing any symptoms of Psorosis as the progeny will in all probability be affected. In Western Australia where the incidence of Psorosis is low, the most reasonable approach to its control is to remove and destroy infected trees when they become unproductive and to use for replants or new plantings, trees propagated only from vigorous mature parents in the vicinity of 20 years of age which have remained free of Psorosis symptoms.

CITRUS CROP YIELDS DOWN

Abnormal spring and summer weather conditions have had a marked effect on crop yields of all citrus fruits, reports the Horticulture Division of the Department of Agriculture.

Warm dry spring weather was followed earlier than usual by hot summer conditions, with numerous centuries and hot, dry winds. Shedding of young fruit was consequently heavy, and in some orchards was accentuated by mealy bug and heavy scale infestations. There was little or no rain until March, when good falls eased the situation. Irrigation water was short in most districts. Despite the moisture stress the effect of the summer on fruit size was less than expected, and only in some non-irrigated orchards is fruit small.

The following crop estimates are based on figures from the Bureau of Census and Statistics, and refer to fruit from commercial growers only. The lemon crop estimate of 70,000 bushels would be considerably higher if fruit from non-commercial growers was included.

The current season's crop of lemons could be the lightest on record. This reflects the weak blossoming of lemon trees last spring, following two extremely heavy crops of the past two seasons. Poor setting of fruit was aggravated by heavy shedding during the summer. The summer lemon crop was also light.

It is estimated that oranges will also be well below last year's crop. Although navels blossomed profusely, heavy shedding of young fruit seriously depleted the crop. Setting was quite good in Valencias, but summer shedding was again heavy. Young trees of both varieties are carrying good crops. Fruit sizes are generally good. The total orange crop estimate is 330,000 bushels, made up of 155,000 bushels of navels and 175,000 bushels of Valencias. This too is likely to be one of the lightest on record.

Grapefruit and mandarins were less affected and are carrying better crops. Both are estimated at 19,000 bushels.
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CITRUS PLANTINGS

The trend in citrus plantings in Western Australia is towards oranges, with emphasis on Valencias. There is some interest in mandarins and lemons, but few grapefruit are being planted.

This was shown by a recent Horticulture Division estimate of citrus planting in Western Australia. Figures were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1960</th>
<th>1961 (estimated)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Washington Navel orange</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valencia orange</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lemons</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandarins</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grapefruit</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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These are new plantings only, and do not include replanting in existing orchards.

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