

CDFA Release#12-012

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**CITRUS DISEASE HUANGLONGBING DETECTED IN HACIENDA HEIGHTS AREA
OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY**

SACRAMENTO, March 30, 2012 – The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) today confirmed the state’s first detection of the citrus disease known as huanglongbing (HLB), or citrus greening. The disease was detected in an Asian citrus psyllid sample and plant material taken from a lemon/pummelo tree in a residential neighborhood in the Hacienda Heights area of Los Angeles County.

HLB is a bacterial disease that attacks the vascular system of plants. It does not pose a threat to humans or animals. The Asian citrus psyllid can spread the bacteria as the pest feeds on citrus trees and other plants. Once a tree is infected, there is no cure; it typically declines and dies within a few years.

“Citrus is not just a part of California’s agricultural economy; it’s a cherished part of our landscape and our shared history,” said CDFA Secretary Karen Ross. “CDFA is moving swiftly to protect the state’s citrus growers as well as our residential trees and the many prized citrus plantings in our parks and other public lands. We have been planning and preparing for this scenario with our growers and our colleagues at the federal and local levels since before the Asian citrus psyllid was first detected here in 2008.”

Officials are making arrangements to remove and dispose of the infected tree and conduct treatment of citrus trees within 800 meters of the find site. By taking these steps, a critical reservoir of disease and its vectors will be removed, which is essential. More information about the program will be provided at an informational open house scheduled for Thursday, April 5, at the Industry Hills Expo Center, The Avalon Room, 16200 Temple Avenue, City of Industry, from 5:30 to 7:00 pm.

Treatment for HLB will be conducted with the oversight of the California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal-EPA) and will be conducted safely, with advance and follow-up notices provided to residents in the treatment area.

An intensive survey of local citrus trees and psyllids is underway to determine the source and extent of the HLB infestation. Planning has begun for a quarantine of the infested area to limit the spread of the disease by restricting the movement of citrus trees, citrus plant parts, green waste, and all citrus fruit except what is commercially cleaned and packed. As part of the quarantine, citrus and closely related plants at nurseries in the area will be placed on hold.

Residents of quarantine areas are urged not to remove or share citrus fruit, trees, clippings/grrafts or related plant material. Citrus fruit may be harvested and consumed on-site.

CDFa, in partnership with the USDA, local agricultural commissioners and the citrus industry, continues to pursue a strategy of controlling the spread of Asian citrus psyllids while researchers work to find a cure for the disease.

HLB is known to be present in Mexico and in parts of the southern U.S. Florida first detected the pest in 1998 and the disease in 2005, and the two have now been detected in all 30 citrus-producing counties in that state. The University of Florida estimates the disease has tallied more than 6,600 lost jobs, \$1.3 billion in lost revenue to growers and \$3.6 billion in lost economic activity. The pest and the disease are also present in Texas, Louisiana, Georgia and South Carolina. The states of Arizona, Mississippi and Alabama have detected the pest but not the disease.

The Asian citrus psyllid was first detected in California in 2008, and quarantines are now in place in Ventura, San Diego, Imperial, Orange, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, San Bernardino and Riverside counties. If Californians believe they have seen evidence of HLB in local citrus trees, they are asked to please call CDFa's toll-free pest hotline at 1-800-491-1899. For more information on the Asian citrus psyllid and HLB visit: <http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/phpps/acp/>

NOTE: CDFA will host a conference call for credentialed members of the news media today, March 30, at 4 pm. Speakers will be Dr. Robert Leavitt, director of Plant Health and Pest Prevention Services at CDFA, and Kurt Floren, Los Angeles County agricultural commissioner. Credentialed media representatives are invited to call 1-888-603-9813. The password is: Agriculture.

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CDFA Protects!

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