

Citrus Quarantine Update – January 2020

By Deborah Birge, Fort Bend Master Gardener

The citrus quarantines in our area are confusing to most people. This article will attempt to address and simplify some of these issues.

First, it's important to understand there are two quarantines affecting our area. Secondly, it's important to remember the quarantines are in place to contain and eradicate dangerous citrus diseases threatening our commercial citrus industry. This industry is worth more than \$200 million yearly to Texans. In our area, the diseases are only in private homeowners' yards at this point, so we are the frontline of containment and eradication.

Citrus Greening Disease (CG)

The first quarantine was established in 2014. It is a countywide quarantine encompassing Fort Bend, Harris and Montgomery counties. Recently Brazoria and Galveston counties were added.

CG is a bacterium injected into your tree via a very small insect called the Asian Citrus Psyllid (ACP). There is no cure for this disease resulting in the inevitable death of your tree. Symptoms are varied so learn more about the signs of CG by using this website - <https://www.citrusalert.com/about-citrus-greening/citrus-greening-qa/>



Codes and Regulations for Citrus Greening Disease

- A tree can be purchased outside the quarantine area and brought into the quarantined area if grown in a nursery certified to be Citrus Greening Disease-free. The tree will be labeled with this certification.
- Do not bring in trees from Mexico.
- A certified tree purchased within the quarantine area can be moved anywhere inside the area. But you must not take any product outside a boundary.

Citrus Canker (CC)

The second quarantined area was established July 28, 2016 in the northeast section of Fort Bend County and in Harris County. Recently, Pearland and surrounding areas of Brazoria county have been added. You can find the map at this link,

<http://www.texasagriculture.gov/RegulatoryPrograms/PlantQuality/PestandDiseaseAlerts/CitrusCanker.aspx>.

CC is a bacterium that blooms in the rain or irrigation then blows in the wind to enter another tree via a wound. You can learn more about the symptoms of CC with this link, <https://www.citrusalert.com/438-2/>

How to Help Prevent these Diseases

It is important to remember there is no cure for these diseases, so prevention is key. We, as hobby growers, must

- Use good sanitation practices. Rake up fallen leaves, double bag and send them to the landfill.
- Do not compost leaves since the bacterium can thrive in fallen leaves.
- Avoid wounding your tree with unnecessary pruning.
- Keep machine, bird and insect damage to a minimum by spraying or using exclusion techniques.
- Check your tree often for good health.
- Limit the use of nitrogen fertilizer since this affects the amount of new growth. New growth or flush, is most susceptible to both ACPs and leaf miners.
- Consider spraying a neutralized copper sulfate or copper hydroxide bactericide as a Citrus Canker preventative. Make sure the product is labeled for use on citrus and use as directed.

What is Our Responsibility?

So, what is the bottom line? For all of us, we need to

- Pay attention to our citrus trees.
- Identify trees exhibiting any of the signs discussed in this article and find out if they're infected.
- Only purchase citrus trees from certified nurseries.
- DO NOT move, share or give tree or plant parts to anyone. This may sound extreme, but you cannot guarantee your tree is not diseased unless you have it tested.

- If you live outside the Citrus Canker zone, consider washing any fruit you share with an anti-bacterial soap.

If you suspect an infected tree, send pictures to Fort Bend Master Gardeners at fortbendmg@ag.tamu.edu or call 281-341-7068.

Or you can call the Texas Department of Agriculture at 1-800-835-5832.

Gottwald, T.R. The Plant Health Instructor, 2005, USDA, ARS, Orlando, Florida

Kevin Ong, Associate Professor and Extension Plant Pathologist, Citrus Canker, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

James Boone Holladay, Citrus Canker Disease in Fort Bend County, 2016, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

Texas Citrus Greening, photo

Texas Department of Agriculture, Citrus Greening Disease Quarantine, 2016

http://www.crea.ifas.ufl.edu/extension/trade_journals/2015/2015_August_leprosis.pdf

<https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/>

Fort Bend County Master Gardeners are trained volunteers who assist Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in educating the community using research-based horticultural information.