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bitter pit

Posted by **Brian Caldwell**

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Brian Caldwell
bitter pit
January 07, 2014 12:51AM

Registered: 10 years ago
Posts: 69

Looking for some advice--

I applied lime at 2 tons per acre to the surface last spring, but still had bad bitter pit at harvest. How long do you think it takes for lime to get to the tree roots? I sprayed OrCa at a gallon per acre 5 times as well. Are there better products out there for getting calcium into fruit? I also did some light summer pruning, mostly removing suckers.

Will this situation get better as the lime works into the soil, or is there more I should do?

Thanks!

Hemlock Grove Farm
Zone 5 in New York
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Jeb Thurow
Re: bitter pit
January 07, 2014 01:42AM

Registered: 11 years ago
Posts: 15

A couple of things you might consider. depending on the Ca that you applied it can sometimes take awhile for it to work through the soil foodweb to become available. Take a look at your soil test and look at CEC and amount of Boron. Ca has a hard time getting into the tree without Boron regulating where it needs to go. The other problem can be that you have a low CEC where everything is saturated so the Ca had nowhere to go but downstream. Ca is highly soluble and can be leached readily. Just a couple of thoughts

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Todd Parlo
Re: bitter pit
January 07, 2014 05:21PM

Registered: 10 years ago
Posts: 301

Brian, you may already be aware of this, but for the general public out there : fruit should be sprayed when it is in its early stage of growth for the best results in a spray calcium approach. Also, it is going to be worse the more you thin and size up the fruit, and will be bad if you get periods of dry soils. High nitrogen also will add to the problem. I know folks will dump a lot of calcium orchard wide, when only a few susceptible cultivars are showing trouble, which seems unnecessary. Our Sweet 16s for instance are the only ones to date that are really problematic, and foliar spraying I see, is going to be the only option.

Walden Heights Nursery & Orchard
Zone 3 in Vermont
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Zea Sonnabend
Re: bitter pit
June 07, 2014 03:07AM

Registered: 10 years ago
Posts: 58

We use a calcium chloride called Mora Leaf from Wilbur Ellis. The bummer is that you have to buy a whole pallet or find someone to split it with. The pallet will last 3 years on our 10 acres of mature standard trees. We have put on soil limestone the past two falls, but it does take quite awhile for it to make any difference to uptake. Everything I read and most soil experts I talk to think this is very important in general for a lot of reasons besides bitter pit.

The limestone in fall helps break down the leaves that fall and therefore any scab spores that fall with them. Michael mentions this in his book several times. It helped us get rid of a very bad scab attack in 2012 to the point where we hardly have any now. Granted our pH was 5.2 and the soil very low in calcium, but I believe that building up the calcium over time will eventually control scab, help with bitter pit, improve storage abilities of even the apples that don't get bitter pit because it strengthens cell walls and more. It also helps the cover crop grow better to provide more organic matter and nutrients. Lastly it helps balance the cations in better ratios and this is important in giving the trees more resistant and resiliant immune systems to combat all kinds of stress.

The Mora leaf is sprayed on every other row once a week for about 10 weeks. Last year we did every row every other week, but switched to this for 2014 so we could combine it with Dipel and Cyd-X.

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Zone 9b in California
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