

## PD-resistant rootstocks

In "Insecticide treatments disinfest nursery citrus of glassy-winged sharpshooter" (October-December 2003, p. 128-31), the authors state that



The glassy-winged sharpshooter

there are no resistant rootstocks to Pierce's disease (PD). This is incorrect. There are actually a number of PD-resistant rootstocks. While none of them ameliorates the effects of *Xylella fastidiosa* in susceptible scions grafted to them, this omission implies that the grape industry is without options in development of new cultivars that are resistant to PD. Historically, there were grape-breeding programs in the South within the range of PD at the University of Florida and at the U.S. Department of Agriculture station in Meridian, Miss. Both of these programs developed grape cultivars that are resistant to

PD and long-lived under high PD pressure. Hopefully, with time, breeders in California will develop high quality, PD-resistant scions and rootstocks that will give California grape growers options in areas with glassy-winged sharpshooter infestations.

Tim Bourne, grape breeder  
Visalia

*Editor's note: As the writer points out, while PD-resistant rootstocks have been developed, none confer resistance to grafted breeds (scions) and there are currently no commercially available, effective breeds for grape growers to ward off Pierce's disease. UC scientists and others are studying the genetics of grapes, glassy-winged sharpshooter and the *X. fastidiosa* bacterium in an effort to develop disease-resistant varieties, in conjunction with an extensive classical breeding program (see July-September 2003, p. 69).*

**WHAT DO YOU THINK?** The editorial staff of *California Agriculture* welcomes your letters, comments and suggestions. Please write to us at calag@ucop.edu or 1111 Franklin St., 6th fl., Oakland, CA 94607. Include your full name and address. Letters may be edited for space and clarity.

## Science briefs

### Bush proposes immigration reform

On January 7, President Bush proposed a temporary worker program called Fair and Secure Immigration Reform, "to match willing foreign workers with willing U.S. employers, when no Americans can be found to fill the jobs." The proposal would grant legal status for 3 years to illegal workers in the United States, allowing them to travel back and forth to their home country without fear of being denied re-entry. "We must make our immigration laws more rational, more humane," Bush said.

UC Davis agricultural economist Philip Martin says the Bush proposal would allow U.S. employers to validate their past hiring of unauthorized workers and gain easier access to unskilled migrants from abroad, but would not provide migrants with a clear path to immigrant status and citizenship.

A study in this issue of *California Agriculture* reports that there are currently about 400,000 year-round equivalent jobs in California agriculture, which are filled by an estimated 1.1 million

workers (see page 35). Half of these workers are believed to be unauthorized.

"In California, self-employed unauthorized workers, such as those hired in day-labor markets and seasonally in agriculture, are presumably out of luck," Martin says. "They may find it hard to find employers who can provide credible employment histories."

Furthermore, Martin says, past experience with temporary worker programs — such as Braceros — in diverse governments and labor markets has shown that "nothing is more permanent than temporary workers."

### Ecosystem approach for Klamath fish

Instead of focusing primarily on how water levels and flows affect endangered and threatened fish in the Klamath Basin, federal agencies charged with protecting the region's fish should pay greater attention to other causes of harm, says an October report from a National Research Council committee.

The committee included UC Davis professors Peter Moyle and Jeffrey Mount. Federal agencies cut off irrigation water to some Klamath Basin farmers in 2001 in an attempt to save endangered fish during a drought, igniting controversy over the Endangered Species Act (see *California Agriculture*, July-August 2002).



At least half of California's agricultural workers are believed to be unauthorized.