

# Arizona Department of Agriculture

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Citrus Greening Disease Detection - Nogales, AZ

**Nogales, AZ - Citrus greening, also called Huanglongbing (HLB), is a bacterial infection of citrus plants. It is one of the most serious citrus diseases in the world. Once infected, most trees die within a few years. There is no cure. While the disease poses no health threat to people or animals, it has devastated millions of acres of citrus crops throughout the United States and abroad.**

In the United States, citrus greening is spread by a tiny insect called the Asian citrus psyllid (*Diaphorina citri* Kuwayama) (ACP). Infected trees produce fruits that are poorly colored, possibly lopsided, and bitter. This fruit can only be sold for juicing. Citrus greening is currently found throughout Georgia, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. It is also found in portions of Alabama, California, Louisiana, South Carolina, and Texas. (USDA-APHIS-PPQ)

On December 16, 2024, during a routine monitoring exercise by USDA-APHIS-PPQ, agricultural inspectors collected ACP and plant tissue samples from a residential citrus tree in Nogales, AZ. Those samples were sent for HLB testing by a USDA laboratory. The initial results determined the plant tissue sample was negative for HLB, but the psyllid sample was found to be suspect HLB. The insect sample was then sent to the confirmatory laboratory in Beltsville, MD where those results confirmed that the insect sample was positive for HLB on January 6, 2025. During follow-up monitoring around the initial detection site, an additional ACP and a citrus plant tissue sample were confirmed positive for HLB.

This is the first time HLB has been confirmed in AZ. Since its first discovery in 2008 until now, only the ACP has been known to occur in the state. These recent collection sites are near the southern border with Mexico and over 180 miles from any production citrus in the state. With the sparse desert landscape between Nogales and any production citrus, the risk for spread to commercial citrus is minimal at this time.

The AZDA is working collaboratively with USDA-APHIS-PPQ, who will continue to survey in Santa Cruz County to determine the extent of the infestation and determine quarantine and mitigation measures that are appropriate for this situation. The AZDA and USDA will be in contact with state and local officials and local communities to provide information to help reduce the further spread of the disease. This may include not moving citrus plants, citrus yard waste, and home picked citrus fruit. Commercially packed citrus fruit is not affected by this detection as long as there is no leaf material accompanying the fruit. The AZDA and USDA will be asking for cooperation from the community in and around Nogales to help save our citrus and stop the spread of HLB.

For more information on this disease and insect pest that carries it please go to:

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant-pests-diseases/citrus-diseases/citrus-greening-and-asian-citrus-psyllid> or call our Tucson Operations Office at (520) 628-6314.