

# San Joaquin Pomologist

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## 2020 Walnut Freeze: Reporting the Damage

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2020 brought yet another major autumn freeze. Our best guess for explaining the walnut freeze damage observed in 2021 are drastic fluctuations of temperature during November and early December of 2020. Temperatures had been warm in the first week of November with highs around 80 degrees before temperatures dropped well below freezing (lows in the 20s) on several occasions. Walnut trees, much like other perennial crops, require a slow decline of temperature to convert to dormancy. This was not the case this previous fall resulting in severe cases of freeze damage at several locations in the North San Joaquin Valley.

**The USDA Farm Services Agency (FSA)** encourages walnut growers who experienced losses from the 2020 autumn freeze to report losses to their local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office:

County	USDA Farm Services Agency (FSA) Phone Number
San Joaquin	(209) 337-2124 ext. 2
Stanislaus	(209) 287-3669
Merced	(209) 722-4119
Mariposa	(209) 722-4119
Madera	(559) 674-4628
Fresno	(559) 276-7494
FSA Service Center Locator at: <a href="https://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app">offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app</a>	

These are the two USDA FSA programs you may qualify to apply for.

**Disaster Assistance**

Eligible orchardists, vineyardists, and nursery tree growers may be eligible for cost-share assistance through the [Tree Assistance Program](#) (TAP) to rehabilitate or replant and clean-up damage to orchards and vineyards that kill or damage the tree, vines or shrubs. For TAP, a program application must be filed 90 calendar days after the disaster event or the date when the loss is apparent.

**Risk Management**

Producers who have risk protection through [Federal Crop Insurance](#) or FSA's [Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program](#) (NAP) should report crop damage to their crop insurance agent or FSA office. If they have crop insurance, producers should report crop damage to their agent within 72 hours of damage discovery and follow up in writing within 15 days. For NAP covered crops, a [Notice of Loss](#) (CCC-576) must be filed within 15 days of the loss becoming apparent, except for hand-harvested crops, which should be reported within 72 hours. NAP or Federal Crop Insurance often only covers the crop and not the plant.

*Information courtesy of Brooke Raffaele, Public Affairs & Outreach Coordinator at the California Farm Service Agency USDA.*

**UC Cooperative Extension** researchers will also be conducting a walnut freeze damage survey. This online survey will ask about the orchard characteristics and grower practices surrounding freeze damaged orchards, with the hope of refining best practices for preventing future freeze damage. Look out for this survey from your local orchard advisor later this summer. Finally, save the date for a Zoom meeting tentatively scheduled for **September 1st**, when Luke Milliron will be hosting a panel of UC researchers and walnut growers to share their experience and lessons learned in preventing sudden autumn freeze damage.