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California

Chances growing for wet winter in Northern California

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

SACRAMENTO — As far as California is concerned, rainfall delayed isn't necessarily rainfall denied.

Despite the prognosis for a dry October, forecasters are still bullish on the chances that winter will be wetter than normal because of El Nino atmospheric conditions that are among the strongest in decades.

Officials from the federal Climate Prediction Center said last month that El Nino's southern storm track could bring above-average precipitation to areas as far north as Sacramento. Now it appears Northern California could get soaked as well.

"Due to the confidence of a strong

El Nino lasting through the winter, it is looking more favorable that Northern California could see above-average precipitation in the latter part of winter" from December through March, National Weather Service warning coordinator Michelle Mead said in an email.

Forecasters have been quick to caution that strong El Nino conditions don't always translate into abundant rainfall or snow in the Sierra Nevada.

But the CPC's seasonal precipitation outlook maps show the area with the best chances of above-average rainfall moving north as the winter progresses, finally touching the Oregon state line by February to April. Drier-than-normal weather is expected to persist in the inland Pacific Northwest.

Big storms pushing into Northern Cal-

ifornia would help the Golden State's key reservoirs. Shasta Lake, the centerpiece of the federal Central Valley Project, was at only 34 percent of capacity and 57 percent of its historical average on Oct. 8, while the State Water Project's Lake Oroville was at 30 percent of capacity and 48 percent of normal for that date, according to the state Department of Water Resources.

Over the next few weeks, the CPC envisions above-average chances of precipitation for Southern California extending to parts of the San Joaquin Valley, but Northern California will apparently remain dry. According to AccuWeather's long-range forecasts, the next big chance of rain for Sacramento and areas north could come in the first week of November.



Courtesy Yosemite Sierra Visitors Bureau

A cooking demonstration is held at the 2014 Pomegranate Festival in Madera, Calif. This year's festival will branch out to include nuts, which are grown abundantly in Madera County.

Pomegranate festival to branch out, include nuts

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

MADERA, Calif. — The annual Pomegranate Festival here isn't just about pomegranates anymore.

The fifth annual event slated for Nov. 7 will feature almonds and pistachios, which are grown abundantly in Madera County, in addition to the unique red fruit that grows on bushy shrubs or small trees.

"Our tagline is 'go nuts for pomegranates,'" said Julie Fullmer, director of sales and operations for the Yosemite Sierra Visitors Bureau in Madera.

"We do have a lot of pomegranate products like jelly, juices and honey," she said. "The whole event is all about pomegranates. But we're trying to get bigger and add more agriculture."

The festival was started to highlight pomegranates, which several farms in Madera County were growing. The harvest of pomegranates proceeds

through the fall in California, as the fruit is available from August through December, the Pomegranate Council has explained.

Health experts consider pomegranates a "superfood," noting that they are high in vitamin C and potassium and low in calories, according to the council. Acreage of the fruit has increased in the San Joaquin Valley in the last 15 years, according to the California Farm Bureau Federation.

However, prices for pomegranates have flatlined in recent years as more of the fruit has been diverted to juice, causing several Madera County growers to switch to other crops, Fullmer said. Only one local farm — Home Grown Cellars in Madera — continues to grow the fruit, she said.

By contrast, almonds led the county in value in 2012 at nearly \$458.5 million, while pistachios in the county generated nearly \$182 million in value that year, the CFBF reports.

1,969-pound pumpkin wins annual weigh-in

By **KRISTIN J. BENDER**
and **MARCIO SANCHEZ**
Associated Press

HALF MOON BAY, Calif. — A rippled white whopper weighing in at 1,969 pounds took the title Monday for plump pumpkin at an annual San Francisco Bay Area contest.

Growers gathered with their gargantuan offerings to try to break the world record of 2,323 pounds, which was set by a Swiss grower during a competition in Germany last year.

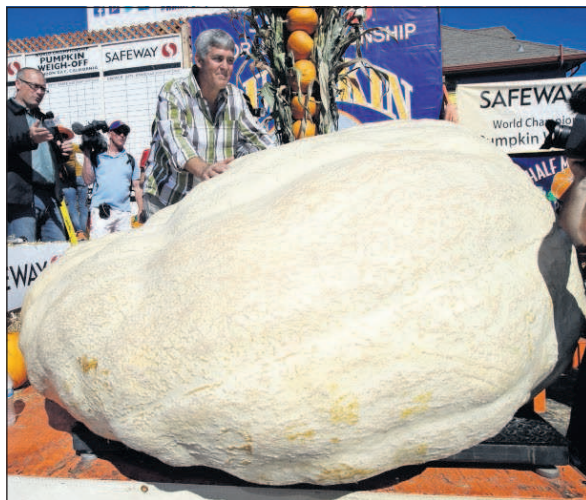
It didn't happen. But the winning entry at the Safeway World Championship Pumpkin Weigh-off in Half Moon Bay, south of San Francisco, was no small feat. Steve

Daletas of Pleasant Hill, Oregon, won \$12,000 for his lumpy, 1,969-pound pumpkin.

"It's been a good year," he said after the contest. "I've never grown an official 1,900-pound pumpkin before."

Forklifts and special harnesses carefully placed the massive pumpkins on an industrial-strength digital scale with a capacity of 5 tons as officials from the county agricultural commissioner's Office of Weights, Sealers and Measures kept close watch.

Second place went to Ron and Karen Root of Citrus Heights, California, for their 1,806-pound entry. A \$500 prize also was awarded to the "most beautiful" pumpkin based on color, shape and size.



AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez

Steve Daletas, center, of Pleasant Hill, Ore., poses for photos with his pumpkin, which weighed in at 1,969 pounds to win the annual Safeway World Championship Pumpkin Weigh-Off Oct. 12 in Half Moon Bay, Calif.

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Have you seen this invasive plant?

Garden Loosestrife is an aggressive, perennial plant that can quickly spread by roots and seeds in wet habitats.

Learn more at www.nwcb.wa.gov

It forms dense stands of upright stems, growing up to 3 or more feet tall. Plants produce extensive rhizomes. Stems and leaves are covered in hairs. Plants may grow in an area for some time before blooming. Leaves are opposite or in whorls of up to 4. Leaf undersides are dotted with black or orange glands.

Flowers are in clusters at stem tips and from leaf axils on the upper portion of the stem. Flowers are yellow, primrose-like and have 5 yellow petals. Plants bloom June to August. Flowers develop into egg-shaped capsules.

Why is garden loosestrife (*Lysimachia vulgaris*) a noxious weed?

- Garden loosestrife forms dense stands in Washington's wetlands, displacing native plant communities.
- Its growth is similar to another noxious weed, purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), with which it can grow and potentially outcompete.

Where do you find flowering rush?

- It grows in moist habitats, such as wetlands, fens, wet woods, lakeshores and riverbanks.
- Infestations are found primarily in western Washington, notably King County, but it can also occur in eastern Washington.

- May be confused with yellow loosestrife (*Lysimachia punctata*), which has single or small clusters of flowers at leaf bases only, never in a terminal cluster.

What can you do?

- Learn to correctly identify this Class B noxious weed.
- Please note that garden loosestrife is designated for control in much of Washington State.
- Report any sightings to your county noxious weed control board or to noxiousweeds@agr.wa.gov.