

# Fighting the blight continues as growers expand

By **JAN JACKSON**  
For the Capital Press

ALBANY, Ore. — David Chambers, a third-generation hazelnut grower who lives just down the road from the Century farm on which he grew up, cut his orchard acreage to 85 acres three years ago.

Harder to get rid of, however, is the eastern filbert blight plaguing his remaining trees. Semi-retired after selling the Century farm to his nephew, Brian Graffenberger, Chambers and his son Eric are spending long days pushing over and burning blight-diseased trees and planting new blight-resistant varieties.

EFB, which is caused by a fungus indigenous to the Northeastern U.S., causes only a canker on the native American hazelnut but is lethal when it appears on the



Jan Jackson/For the Capital Press  
David Chambers, a third-generation hazelnut grower near Albany, Ore., has been replacing the European varieties of hazelnut trees in his orchard with new blight-resistant varieties.

commercially important European hazelnut varieties.

EFB was discovered in the West in 1973. The vigorous-growing jumbo-nut variety Ennis was one of the types

Chambers chose to grow. Now, recognized as one of the varieties most susceptible to EFB, he is replacing them.

“We’re pushing over and burning about 20 acres, which

represents about 2,700 trees,” Chambers said. “In the meantime, I’m replacing them with the Jefferson variety, which was developed and evaluated at Oregon State University in Corvallis. It is supposed to be comparable to the industry standard nut produced by the Barcelona in nut and kernel size. More importantly, it is supposed to be highly resistance to eastern filbert blight.”

Looking at other issues involving the future of hazelnut production, Chambers thinks Oregon’s growing region is on ground that will be OK during the erratic weather expected with climate change. He has seen the brown marmorated stink bugs that are beginning to plague the industry on his property, but has yet to find any damage from them in the orchard. Chambers also sees a continuing marketing challenge in trying

to take hazelnuts to the next level.

“We keep trying to figure out ways to increase product sales but there certainly doesn’t seem to be a simple solution,” Chambers said. “Even though Oregon grows

99 percent of the nation’s hazelnuts, it is still only 5 percent of the world’s. It only takes a bad year on our part and we have to rely on Turkey to make up the difference.”

Oregon’s growers continue to pursue market options.

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