

# Farmers experiment with chipping hazelnut brush

By **BRENNA WIEGAND**  
For the Capital Press

GERVAIS, Ore. — This year hazelnut growers Paul Massee and his wife, Lynnea Lane, are trying something different.

After pruning for eastern filbert blight, everything 4-6 inches thick and smaller is kept in the orchard and piled into windrows. Only the big pieces go to the burn pile.

Then Lane gets her “new toy” and grinds the branches into mulch that stays among the trees.

“It’s a new experiment this year,” Massee said. “It all started when Lynnea saw a flier for Agrishred out of



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Lynnea Lane drives her tractor and chipper-shredder at Massee Farms in Gervais, Ore. This year they’re putting the smaller hazelnut prunings in windrows and chipping them into mulch for the orchard.

Newberg advertising the service.”

The couple manages about 100 acres of hazelnuts on

land owned by Paul’s mother, Judith Massee. Due to Paul’s teaching job at Sprague High School in Salem, they have traditionally stacked all the prunings and waited until school ended in June to deal with them.

There are several reasons they chose to invest \$22,000 in a rear-pulled chipper-shredder. Rears Manufacturing in Eugene built the 10-foot-wide pull-behind ASH chipper-shredder they haul behind a John Deere tractor. The prunings are laid in windrows and the chipper-shredder creates mulch.

The undertaking also required fabrication of a custom belly pan to protect the tractor’s underside from the prunings.

Instead of the material just sitting there until June, the orchard is “opened up” for the winter and the chipped-

up smaller brush has a chance to decompose and keep beneficial organisms in the soil. While an Oregon State University study detected viable ascospores above chipped EFB cankers, it determined that there were not enough to consistently infect nearby trees.

“We’re going to have to figure out if it saves money,” Massee said. “Right now, there’s the expense of the machine and of adding belly guards to the tractor. The amount of diesel could be about the same.”

While Massee is looking forward to the mulch smoothing out his travel lanes, the main thing he hopes for is that shredding EFB-infected branches significantly reduces the probability of re-infecting the remaining healthy trees.

“I’m just hoping it is easier to deal with,” Lynnea said.

“If you take everything that’s out there and push it into burn piles you end up with these huge burn piles. Then you’ve got to bring the ash back into the orchard or find someplace to get rid of it. It might as well stay in the orchard. It’s not going to hurt anything like this. The wind can’t whip through and carry the blight.”

Its success remains to be seen, and comments vary.

“It’s a mixed bag; some neighbors think we’re crazy and others think we’re industry leaders,” he said. “It just sounded like a smarter thing to do than what we’ve been doing.”

As for Lynnea, she’s enjoying herself.

“I’m just going to ride that tractor and pull that shredder behind it,” she said.

“Life is an experiment; we’ll give it a try,” Massee said.



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