

*Merced County*  
*Blossom Tour*





### ***Almond Blossom Tour For East Merced County***

Almond bloom is approximately February 25-28 ± one week.

This tour starts at the corner of Hwy 140 and Tower Road – near the Merced Agriculture Museum and the Fruit Barn.

Start by going south one block on Tower Road

Turn left and go east on Childs

Turn right and go south on Arboleda (means row of trees)

Turn left and go east on Mariposa (means butterfly)

Turn right and go south on Plainsburg

Just past Bright's Nursery and Deadman Creek turn left and go east on Buchanan Hollow

Turn left and go north on Minturn - Buchanan Hollow Nut Company is just south on Minturn

Turn right and go east on Le Grand and through the small town

Turn left and go northwest on Santa Fe

Turn left and go east on Savana which turns right and then left again

Turn right and go north on Burchell one block

Turn left and go west on Mariposa

Turn right and go north on Plainsburg all the way to Planada - At this point you could turn right and go all the way to Mariposa and Yosemite

Turn left and go west on Hwy 140 past the Red Rock Winery

Turn right and go north on Arboleda

Just before you cross Bear Creek turn left and go west on Bear Creek Dr.

Turn left and go south on Orchard Drive

The tour ends when you reach Hwy 140

#### **Other things to do in east Merced County:**

- Bright's Nursery has a large farm equipment museum and gives tours by appointment: (209) 389-4511
- Yosemite Lake Recreation Area (picnic facilities and play areas) northeast of Merced adjacent to the new UC Merced site: go north on Arboleda, turn left and go east on Yosemite Avenue, turn right and go north on Lake Road.





**M**arch is the time of year that several varieties of trees are blooming. Here are a few tips on how to tell what you are seeing:

Almond and apricot trees have white blossoms. Apricots are the first commercial orchard crop to bloom and they are followed closely by almonds. They both have a rough brown trunk and will have several large branches trained to create a large spherical shape. Commercial apricot orchards, very common on the Westside, are rare on the east side of the county.

Peaches and nectarines being the same species (a nectarine is simply any variety of peach without fuzz) bloom next and have two types of blossoms. Some have showy pink blossoms and some varieties have inconspicuous reddish-pink flowers that are so small that you need to walk up to them to see their colors. We call these non-showy types. You can tell the non-showy types are blooming because the whole orchard will have a dark reddish color. Peaches are shorter than almonds and are trained to an open vase shape with a flat top. Some cling peach orchards are pruned to a cordon system similar to the wine grapes in the area. This system, while expensive to develop, allows the tree to be pruned, thinned and harvested without ladders - A feature that both the farmer and workers like very much!

Plum trees bloom with the peach trees, but have compact white blossoms. The trees are shorter than peaches and have very few side branches coming off the upright scaffolds. The older trees will have a gnarled trunk.

Prune trees look just like plums since they are so closely related. Most of the prunes are southeast of Merced and on the Westside of the county.

You may spot a few Asian pears. These trees could be pruned in any fashion and will resemble plum and peach trees. They have larger white flowers and bloom around the same time as plums. The bark on the Asian pears is smoother than both the peach and plum trees.

Walnuts are much larger than the fruit trees and have white smooth bark down to the graft union where the Persian walnut scion wood meets the dark rough California Black Walnut rootstock. All of our fruit and nut trees along with many of the grapes are grown on rootstock, which are resistant to soil pests and diseases such as nematodes, crown and root rot, oak root fungus and others. This allows the farmer to grow imported varieties without chemicals to kill these pests. Walnuts are wind-pollinated and do not need showy flowers to attract insects. In fact, walnuts have separate male flowers (catkins), which release the pollen and female flowers (pistillate) to catch the pollen.

Almond farmers try to set as many flowers as possible so they have to hire beekeepers to place two or three hives per acre to help carry the pollen from the pollinizer variety to the main variety and vice-versa. Since most stone fruit trees set more fruit than they can size anyway and have to be thinned (an expensive operation), bees are not needed for these four crops. Apple orchards, kiwi fruit, and some prune orchards have bees brought in on occasion. Other orchard crops that you will find in Merced County are figs, pistachios, black boysenberries, cherries, olives, pecans, wine and raisin grapes, citrus and persimmons.

Row crops that you may see in the region would be sweet potatoes, cucumbers, tomatoes, bell peppers, strawberries, broccoli, radicchio and all types of melons.

Field crops in the region are cotton, grains, corn, alfalfa, sugar beets and some rice.



### *Blossom Bloom Time*

ALMONDS February 25-28 +/- 10 days

PLUMS March 1-5 +/- 10 days

PEACHES March 10 +/- 10 days

APPLES March 27 +/- 10 days

APRICOTS March 1-10 +/- 10 days

*Merced County is one of  
California's top five producers of:*

- Cantaloupes
- Sheep & Lambs
- Tomatoes
- Honey
- Almonds
- Apricots
- Figs
- Peaches
- Cotton
- Hay & Alfalfa
- Sugar Beets
- Eggs & Chickens for Meat
- Hogs & Pigs
- Turkeys
- Sweet Potatoes
- Milk & Cream
- Oats
- Cattle & Calves

Merced County is ranked sixth over all for total Ag output in the nation.

Merced County is also a major center of agricultural processing and food/wine manufacturing.

**Sources:**

California Agricultural Resource Directory 2000, [www.cdfr.ca.gov](http://www.cdfr.ca.gov)

1997 US Census of Agriculture, [www.usda.gov/nass](http://www.usda.gov/nass)

### **Thank You**

**Maxwell Norton** - Farm Advisor,  
Deciduous Fruits & Vines

University of California  
Cooperative Extension  
Merced County

Your knowledge and the time  
you have invested in this  
brochure is much appreciated.

### **Photos Courtesy of:**

- Robert Dayton
- Maxwell Norton



### **Merced Conference & Visitors Bureau**

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