



## Speaker:



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**Date:** Monday, May 11, 2026

**Time:** 4:00 pm - 4:50 pm

**Format:** In-Person Seminar & Virtual Access

**Location:** Genomics Auditorium 1102A

**Zoom:** 943 6687 2379

**Passcode:** 453393

### Title:

“Lessons learned from over a decade of managing laurel wilt and ambrosia beetles in avocado”

### Abstract:

Laurel wilt is a vascular disease transmitted by ambrosia beetles that has caused the mortality of approximately 200,000 mature avocado trees and an estimated 500 million native trees in the Lauraceae across the southern United States. The causal agent, *Harringtonia lauricola*, is a fungal pathogen and the primary symbiont of the invasive redbay ambrosia beetle, *Xyleborus glabratus*. Although *X. glabratus* is an efficient vector in natural ecosystems, it rarely colonizes avocado trees and is uncommon in commercial orchards. In contrast, several native ambrosia beetle species have acquired *H. lauricola* and function as secondary, less efficient vectors. The absence of a highly effective vector in avocado production systems has created an opportunity to manage the disease through cultural practices and biological control, with minimal reliance on conventional insecticides. Practices such as tree rejuvenation and routine pruning to increase light penetration into the canopy have contributed to reduced ambrosia beetle activity. Currently, approximately 70% of avocado trees lost to laurel wilt are being replanted, reflecting increased grower confidence in disease management. Growers have also reported a decline in disease incidence. Despite these advances in understanding the biology of ambrosia beetles and *H. lauricola*, further development of practical, field-applicable management strategies remains necessary to support long-term disease suppression.