Soil Borne Diseases of Pistachio

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Soil-borne diseases:

The relative importance of soil-borne diseases has changed over time with changes in choice of rootstocks.

Historically (*Pistacia atlantica* rootstock):

- Verticillium wilt

New soil borne diseases (UCB-1 rootstock):

- Phytophthora root and crown rots

Secondary (minor) diseases:

- Macrophomina charcoal rot
- Fusarium crown rot

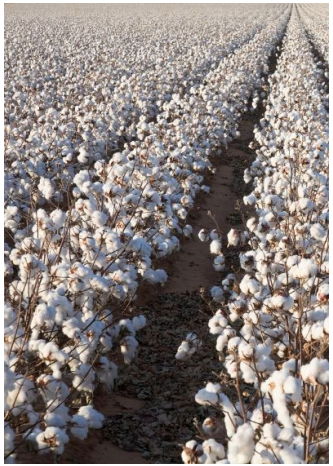
Verticillium Wilt

Verticillium wilt:

- Historically, when trees were planted on ***P. atlantica***, the most destructive disease of pistachio in California (1970s and 80s)
- *Pistacia atlantica* is highly susceptible
- The development of resistant rootstocks (**PGI, UCB1**) in mid to late 80s has solved the Verticillium wilt problem of pistachio in California
- Still observed sporadically in the southern half of the San Joaquin Valley

Verticillium wilt:

- Soilborne fungus*: Verticillium dahliae*
- Wide host range: over 300 plant species (including solanaceous crop)
- Common crops affected in CA include cotton, tomato, pepper, potato, strawberry
- In locations where highly susceptible crops were grown previously (cotton, pepper, tomato…)




Verticillium wilt: Almond

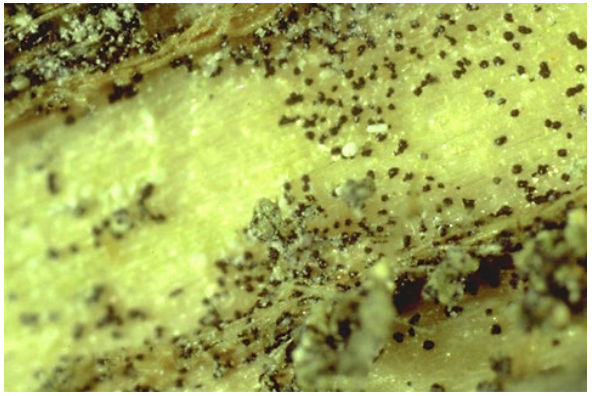
Verticillium wilt: Pistachio

Verticillium thin leaf:

- Symptoms develop slowly over several years and are characterized by a slow loss of vigor and a reduction in growth and yield.
- A gradual thinning of the leaf canopy occurs: “see-through” symptom
- Diagnosis is more difficult

Verticillium thin leaf:

Verticillium wilt:



- Survive in the soil as microsclerotia
- Microsclerotium: hard dark resting body of certain fungi, consisting of a mass of hyphal threads
- Persist in soil for long periods.
- Survive on weed hosts

Disease cycle:

- Microsclerotia germinate in the presence of root exudates
- The pathogen invades the cortical cells of young roots, then the current year's xylem vessels
- It produces conidia that are transported into the tree trunk
- Colonization of the xylem results in disruption of water and nutrient transport

Verticillium wilt:

Management:

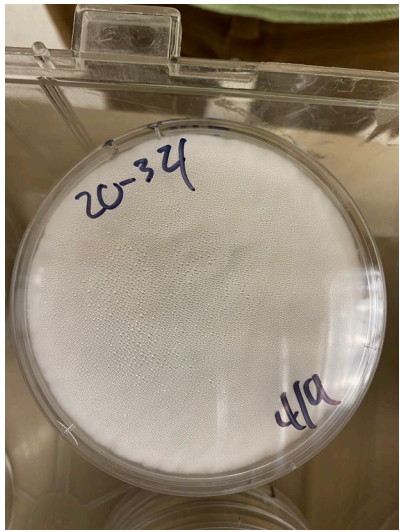
- **Use of resistant/tolerant rootstocks (PGI, UCB-1)**
- **Avoid planting in soils with history of susceptible crops**
- **Avoid inter-cropping your pistachios with a susceptible host crop**
- **Submit soil samples to commercial lab for analysis: # microsclerotia/g soil**
- **For almond/pistachio, 3 microsclerotia per gram of soil is considered high risk**
- Reduce inoculum: flooding fallow field, solarization, fumigation, growing grass crops for several seasons
- Minimizing tree stress through maintenance of soil fertility and soil moisture will help trees tolerate the disease and encourage their recovery, but do not over-irrigate
- Potassium deficiency increases tree loss due to Verticillium at low inoculum levels

Current Research on Rootstock tolerance to Verticillium

Root Inoculations using a conidial suspension

(PGI, Platinum, UCB1)

1- Conidia: Mycelial spread on PDA plate 7 Days



2- Jiffy bags cut on 4 sides of jiffy bag

3- Plants Soaked for 30 min in $1x10^7$ conidia/ml solution

4- Replant into sterile soil, measure disease severity on a weekly basis

Disease Severity Scale

1

Mild wilt, leaf reddening

2

Moderate wilt, leaf necrosis, or defoliation

3

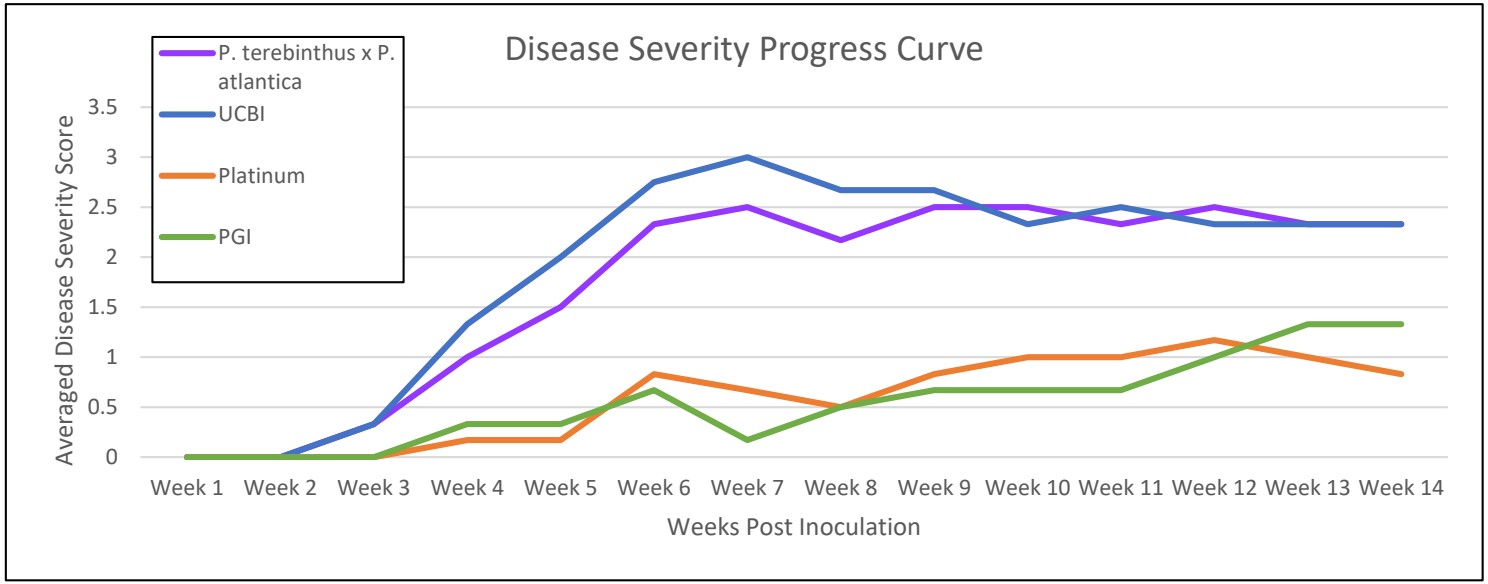
Severe wilt, leaf necrosis, or defoliation

4

Complete wilt, death, or defoliation

Disease Severity Progress Curve

- 4-month-old potted plants, 14-week incubation



Platinum – Rootstock Stem Cross-Sections

Control

Inoculated

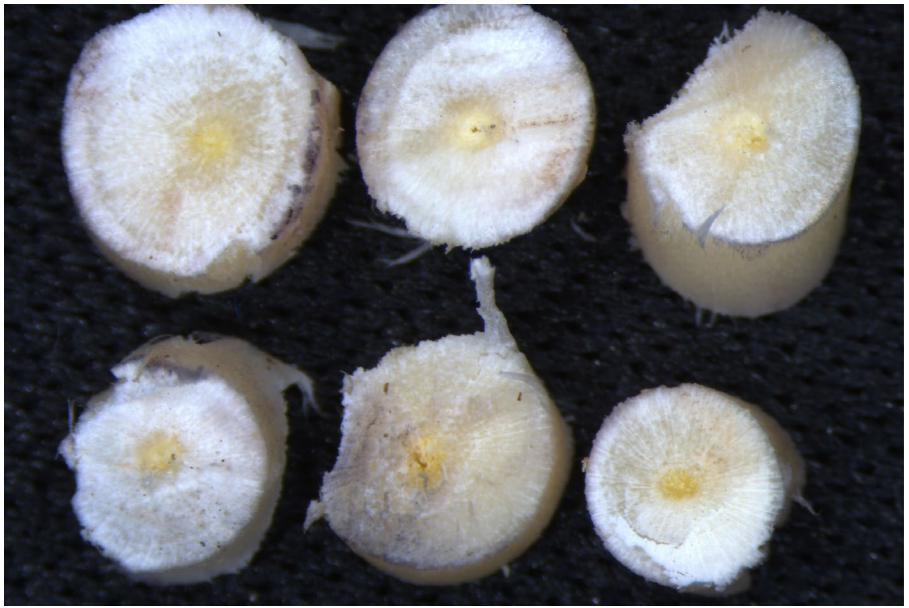
PG1 - Rootstock Stem Cross-Sections

Control

Inoculated

UCB1 - Rootstock Stem Cross-Sections

Control

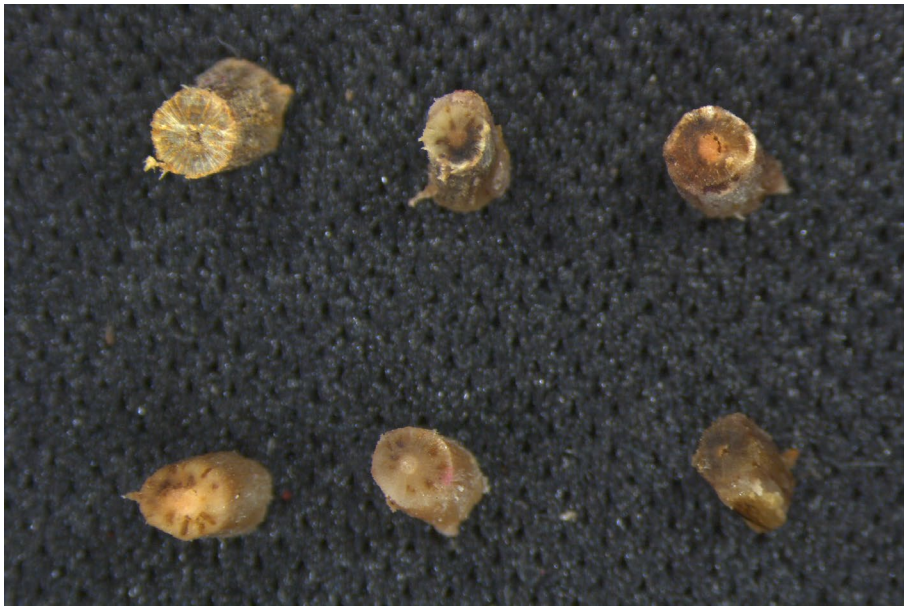


Inoculated

P. terebinthus x P. atlantica - Rootstock Stem Cross-Sections

Control

Inoculated



Phytophthora Crown and Root Rot

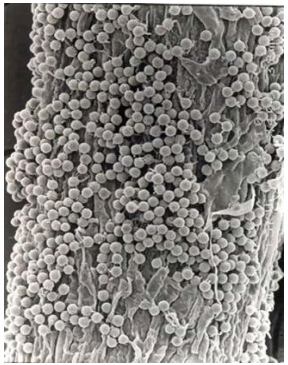
Phytophthora diseases: Generalities

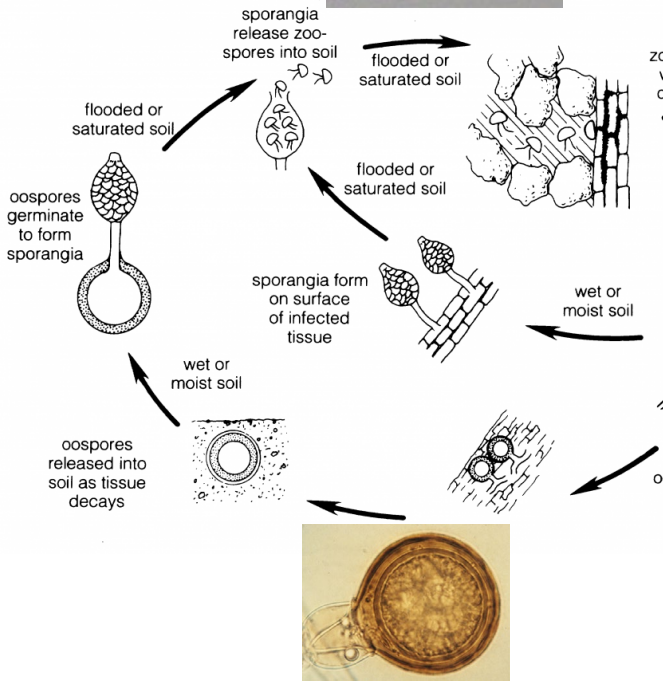
- Soil borne pathogens
- Fungus-like organisms
- Oomycetes: water molds
- Water spores: zoospores – they can swim
- Favored by standing water in the orchard

Phytophthora diseases: Generalities

- *Phytophthora* spp. are present **in canal and river water** and generally introduced to orchards irrigated from these sources
- To date, *Phytophthora* has not been found in well water
- Present in moist soil
- Soil with poor water infiltration/drainage (heavy soil, hardpan)
- Prolonged periods of high soil moisture

Phytophthora disease cycle:





Phytophthora crown rot: Symptoms

Phytophthora crown rot: Symptoms

Photo credits: Carla Youngblood

Phytophthora crown rot: Symptoms

Phytophthora crown rot: Symptoms

- Occurrence of concentric growth rings below the bark

Phytophthora crown rot: Symptoms

- Girdling of trees causing a relatively fast decline

Phytophthora root and crown rots: Symptoms

- Trees of all ages may die from Phytophthora



Phytophthora crown rot: Symptoms

- Gumming in the scion usually turns black, producing larger gum balls

Phytophthora root rot: Symptoms

- Affects small roots, kill feeder roots and reduces the uptake of water and nutrients causing trees to slowly decline

Control plants

Roots treated with Phytophthora

Phytophthora species associated with pistachios in CA:

- *Phytophthora niederhauserii*
- *Phytophthora mediterranea*
- *Phytophthora taxon walnut*

e-Xtra*

Identification and Characterization of *Phytophthora* Species Associated With Crown and Root Rot of Pistachio Trees in California

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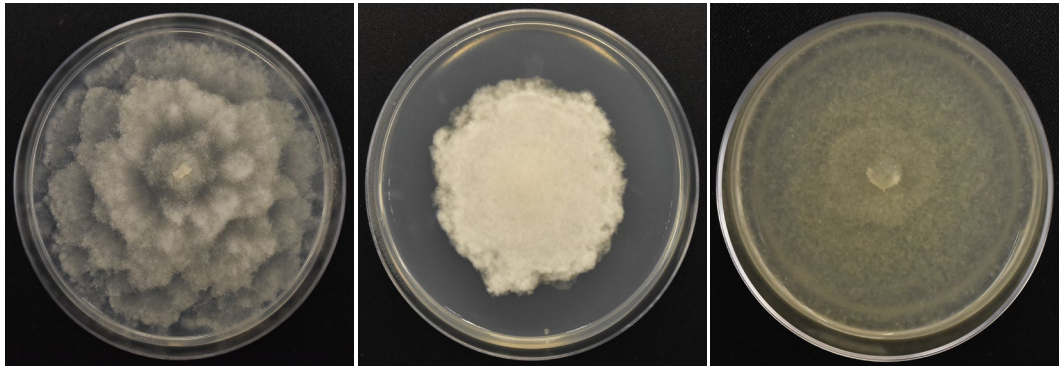
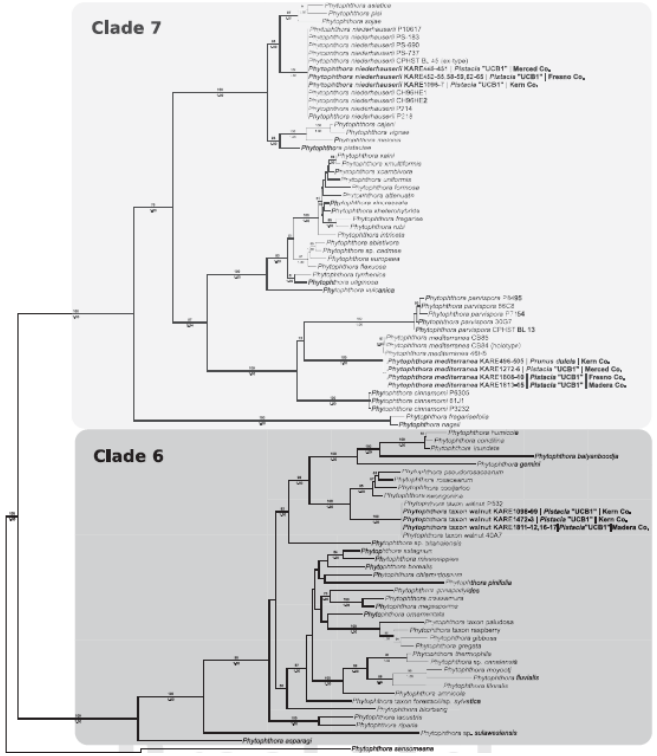
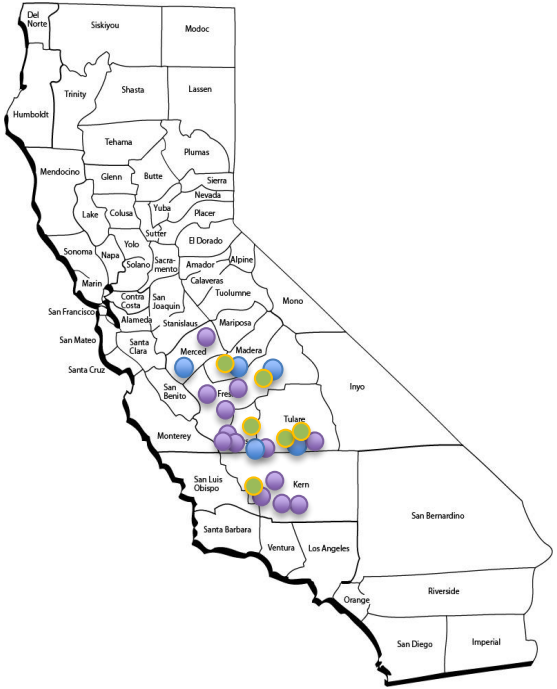




Disease surveys of pistachio orchards

- *Phytophthora niederhauserii*
- *Phytophthora mediterranea*
- *Phytophthora taxon walnut*



Phytophthora crown rot is on the rise in CA pistachios

2021 farm calls (8 orchard visits)









Emergence of Phytophthora Disease

- Increased planting in last 15 years
- 20-25% of current acreage planted in marginal soils
  - Heavy/hardpan soils
  - High saline and saline-sodic soils
  - Poor water infiltration
- Mainly in orchards that use of surface water
  - Phytophthora inoculum source
- Can be found in orchards that use well water
- Over irrigation
- Increased soil compaction

Phytophthora: Disease Management

- Move drip emitters away from the trunk to avoid excessive wetting of the root crown



Current Research on Rootstock tolerance to Phytophthora

Disease Management: Phytophthora

- Water Management
- Site Selection
- Chemical Treatments
  - Phosphites
- **Rootstock Selection**
  - UCB1, PGI, Platinum

Methodology

Stem inoculations

Root inoculations

Commercial rootstocks

Platinum

UCB1

PG1

Stem inoculation study:

- Using mycelial plugs of the various pathogens

1- Trunk disinfection

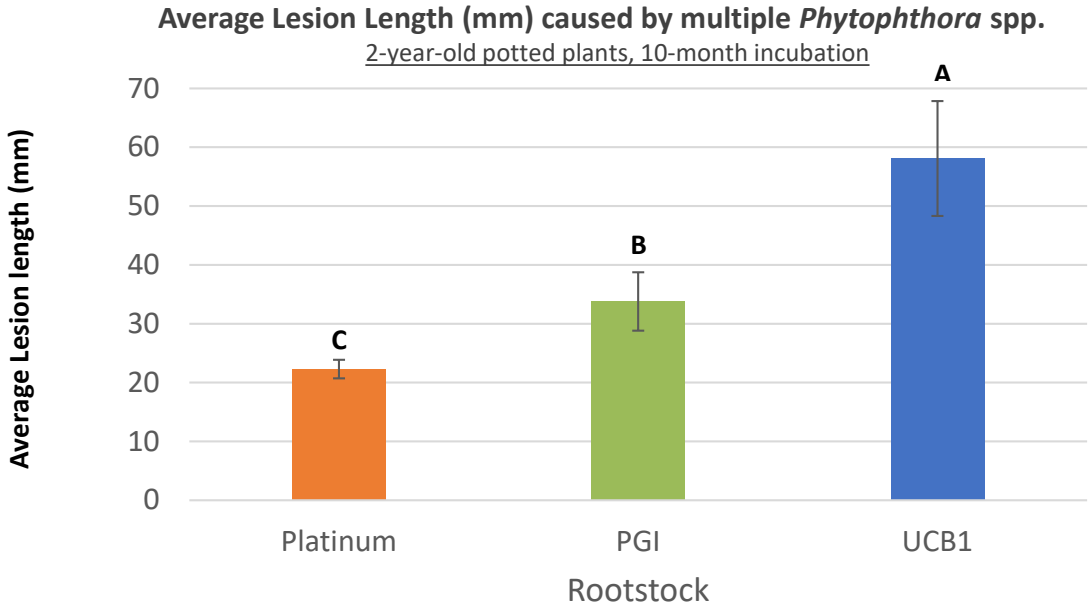
2- Wounding

3- Mycelial plug inoculation

4- Incubation (6-8 months)

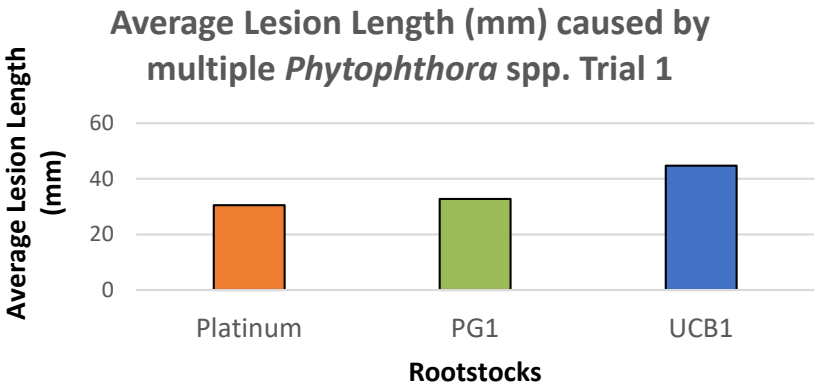
5- Assessing lesion length

Stem inoculations

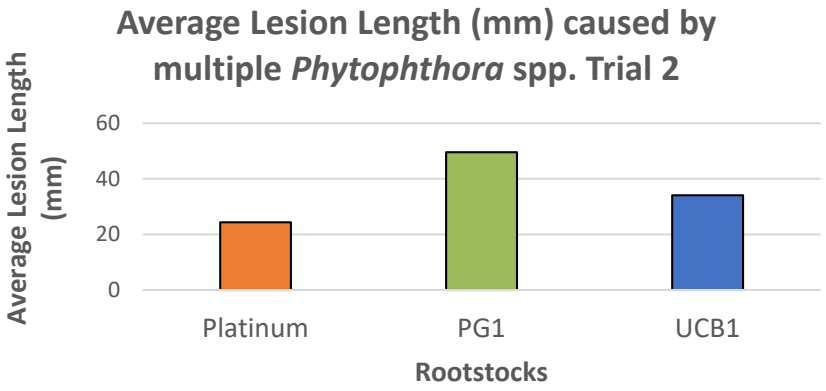


Stem Inoculations

2-year-old potted plants



3-year-old field trees



Root Inoculations:
(Rice Grain)

1- Inoculate Sterile Rice Grains
10-14 Days

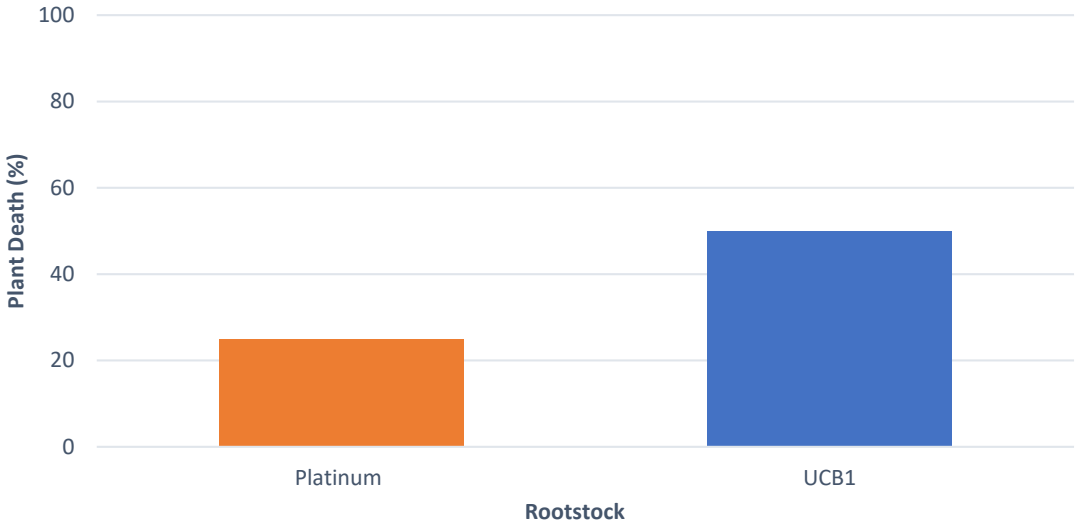
2- Inoculate root ball with inoculated rice grain (5-13g)

3- Flood 4 hours

4- Assess percent of plant death; root mass loss

Root Inoculations (Rice Grain)

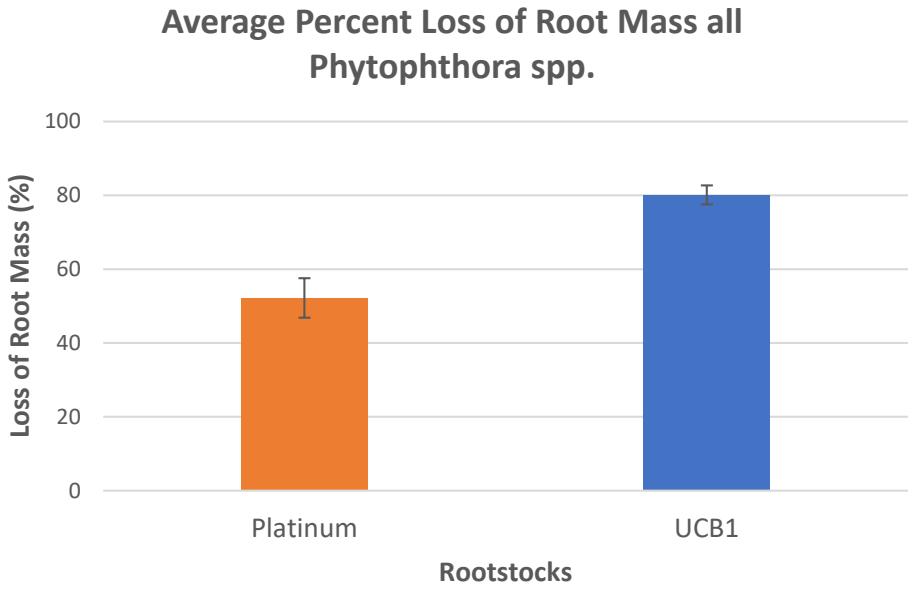
6-month plantlets, 7-week incubation

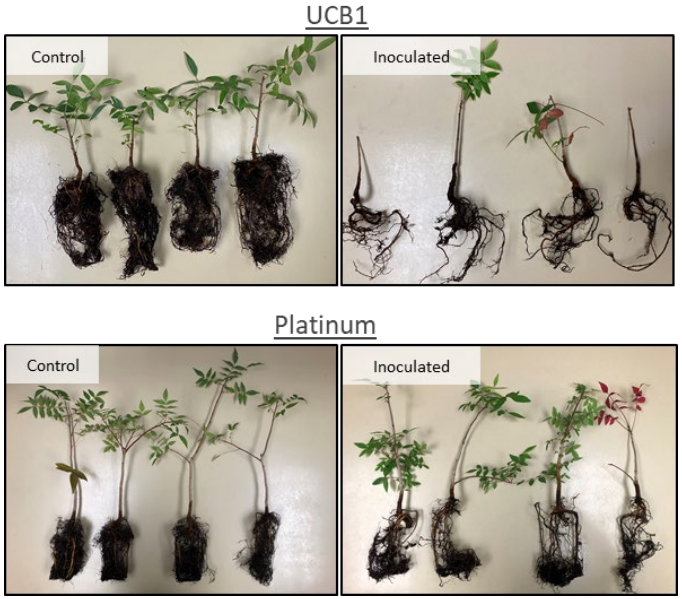


Root Inoculations

(Rice Grain)

6-month plantlets, 7-week incubation

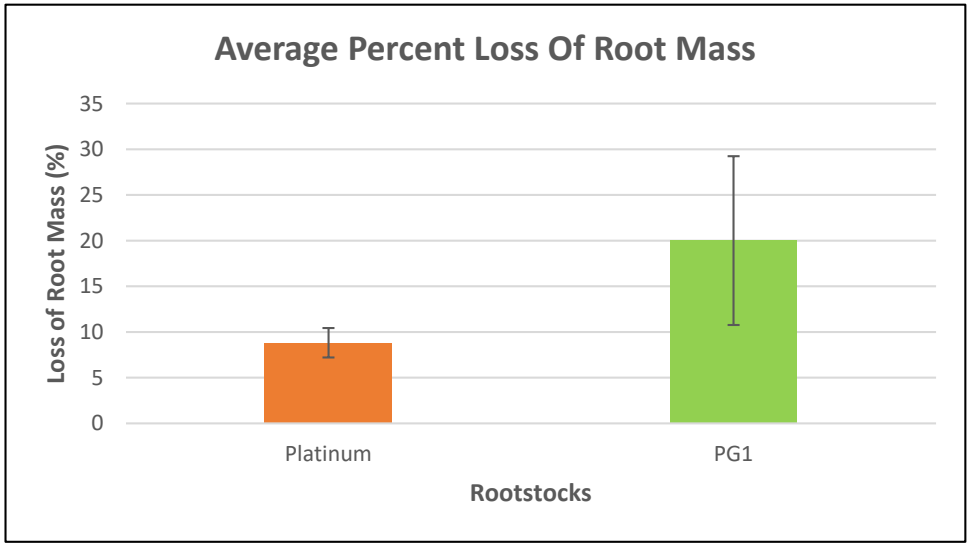




Root Inoculations

(Rice Grain)

4-month Plantlets, 6-month incubation

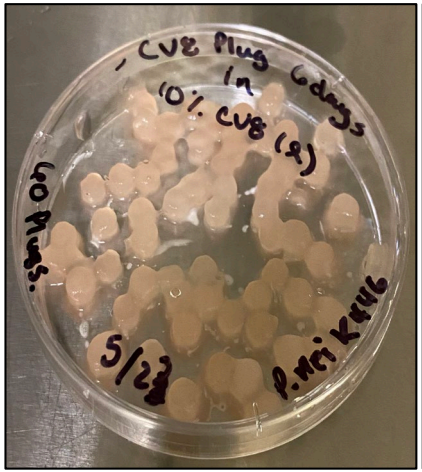


PG1

Platinum

Root Inoculations:
(Zoospore)

1- Induce sporangia formation and zoospore release (1x10^5 zoospore/ml)

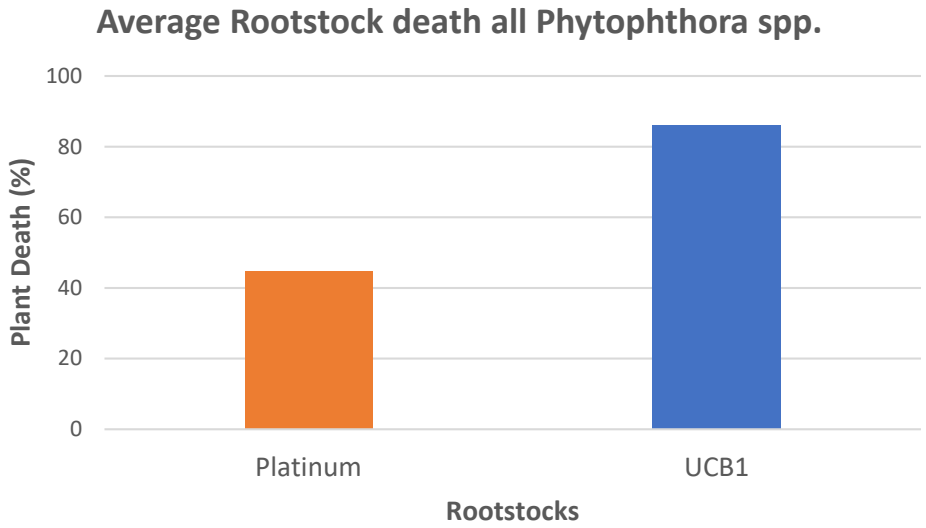


2- Inoculate 25 ml (1x10^5 zoospore/ml) + 4hr flood

3- Assess percent of plant death; root mass loss

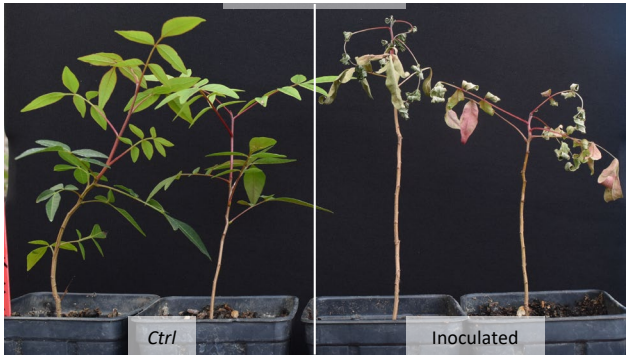
Root Inoculations:
(Zoospores)

- 4-month plantlets, 3-week incubation



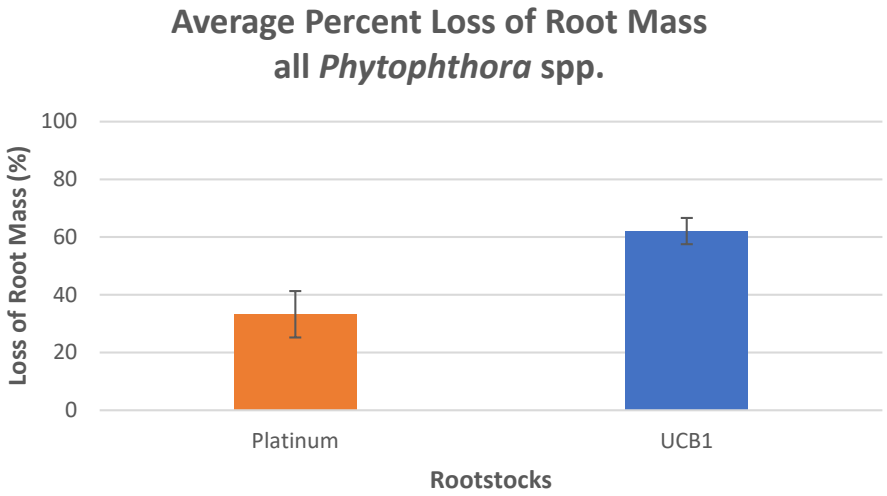
Platinum

UCB1



Root Inoculations:
(Zoospores)

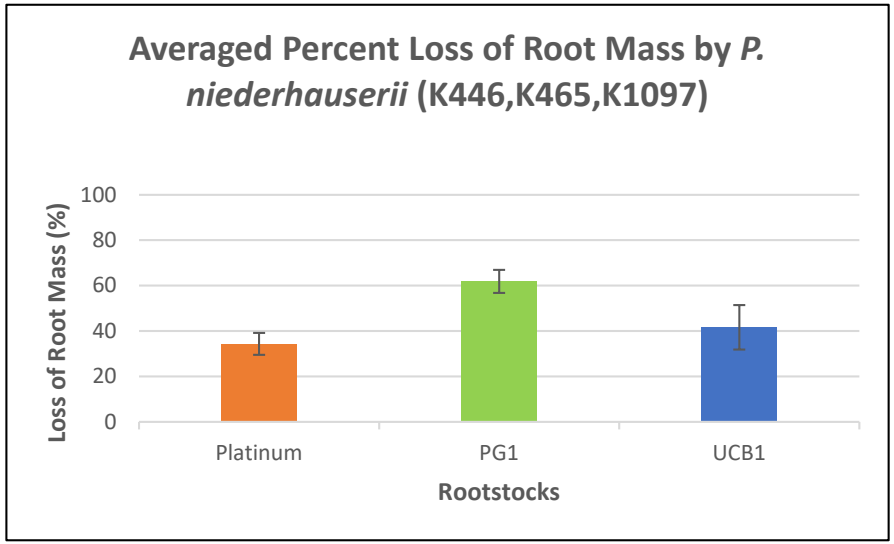
- 1-year old plantlets, 6-month incubation

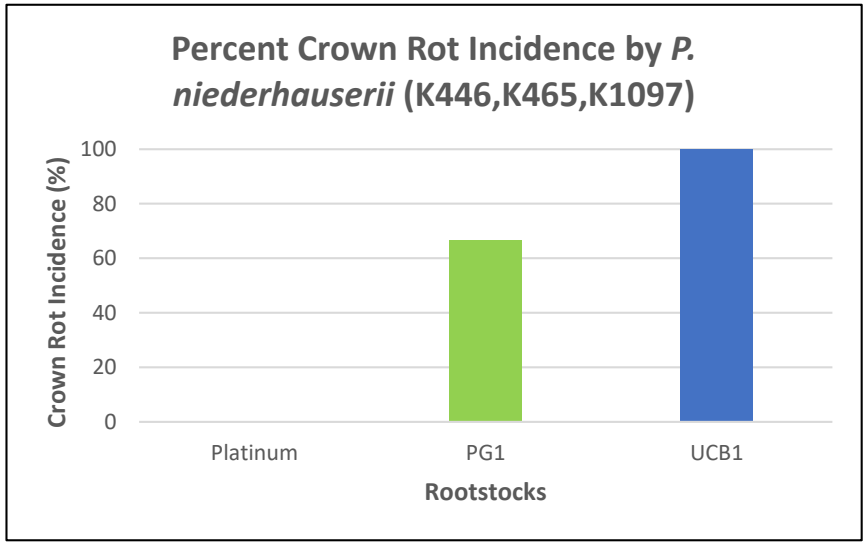


Root Inoculations:

(Zoospores)

- 5-month old plantlets, 6-month incubation, 2021





Conclusion

- Platinum is the rootstock of choice for managing Phytophthora crown and root rot in California
- Data on Verticillium management using Platinum are promising too but these will need to be confirmed

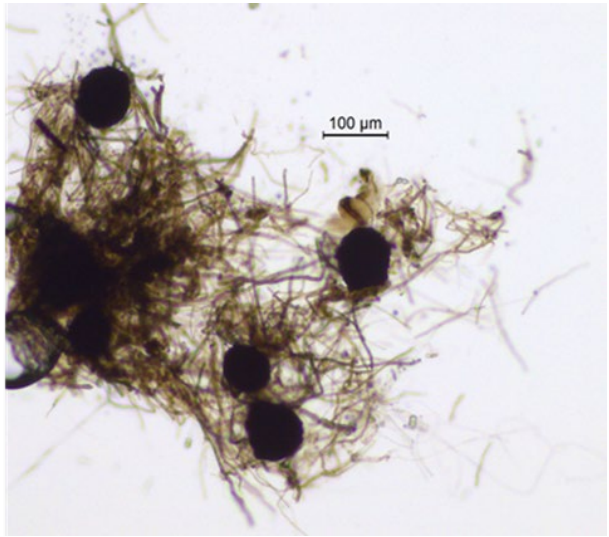
Secondary (minor) soilborne diseases

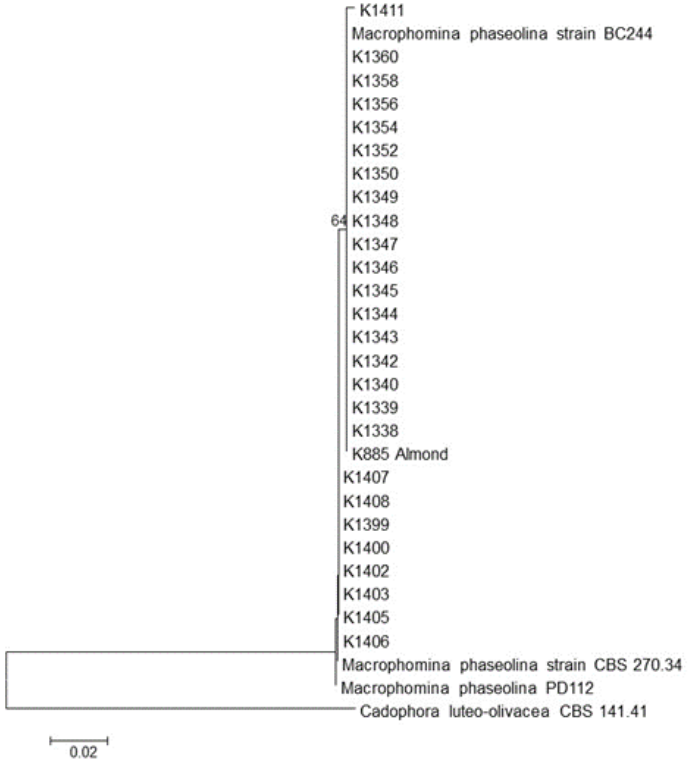
Macrophomina charcoal rot

- Declining of young UCBI rootstocks
- Heavy soils (clay) - West side
- Hot summer days

Macrophomina charcoal rot

- Caused by *Macrophomina phaseolina* (Botryosphaeriaceae)
- Survive in soil as microsclerotia
- Microsclerotia are enhanced under low water potential that occurs during drought





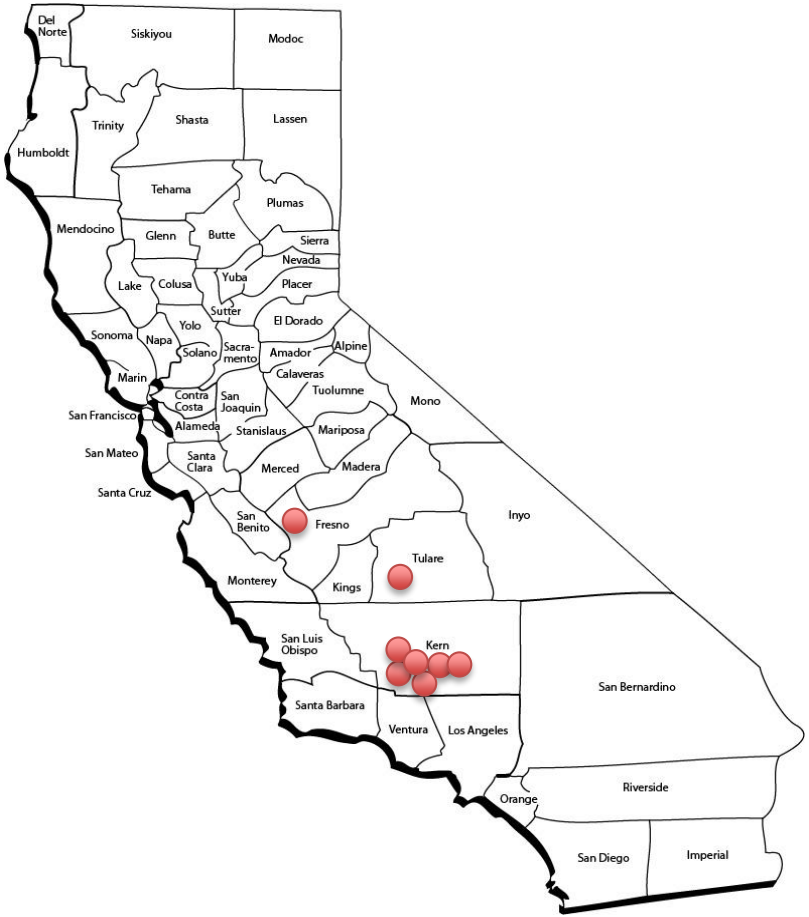
Phylogenetic diversity of *Macrophomina* spp. associated with pistachio crown rot

Macrophomina phaseolina

- Important plant pathogen infecting more than 750 plant species (row crops)
- Causal agent of Charcoal rot (California strawberries)
- Little information about *Macrophomina phaseolina* affecting perennial woody crops
- We have isolated *Macrophomina phaseolina* from declining table grapes and cherry trees

Disease survey in pistachio

- *Macrophomina phaseolina*



Macrophomina charcoal rot

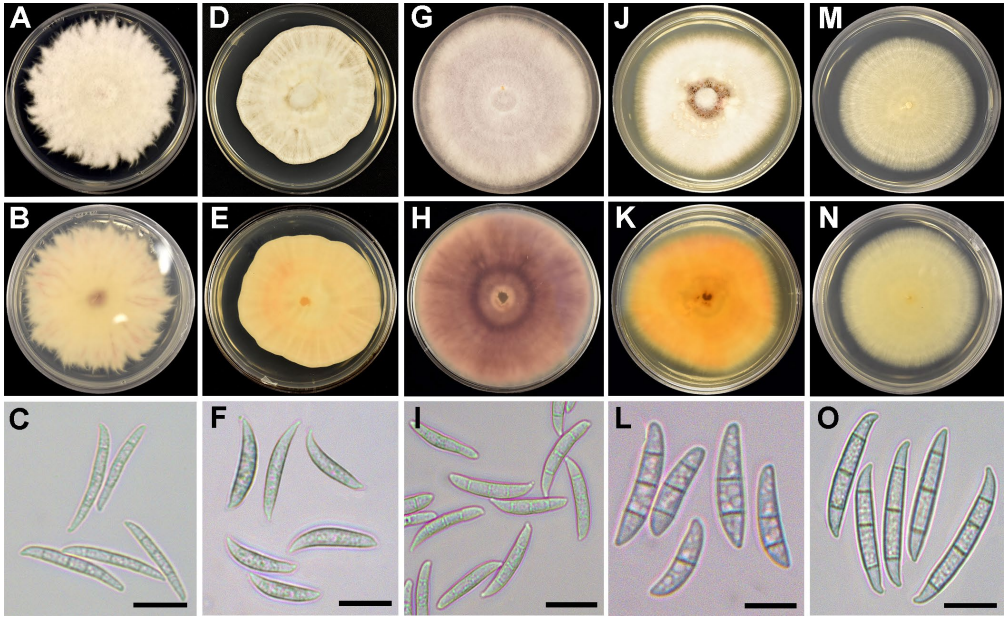
Fusarium crown rots

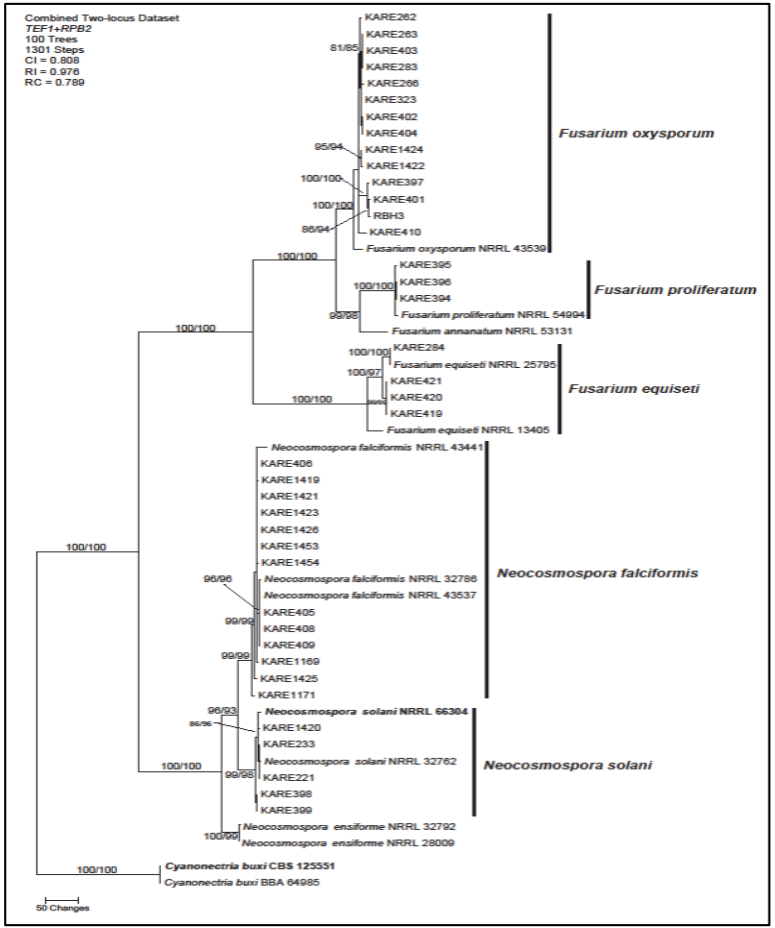
- Unusual symptoms
- Mainly cambium and phloem tissues affected
- Gumming




Fusarium taxonomy

- 5 species isolated from symptomatic pistachio rootstocks





Fusarium as secondary pathogens

- Plant stresses including old Phytophthora infections may allow *Fusarium* species to become virulent in pistachio

THANK YOU!

Alejandro Hernandez,
Graduate student

Rosa Frias,
Laboratory Assistant