



Three generations of almond growers in the Chowchilla, California area is in the blood of John Zinke, who farms in partnership with his father, Harvey Zinke. He freely admits that when something needs to be done on his 400 acres (160 hectares) of orchard, he's the one to do it.

### **Almonds Operation Chowchilla, CA**

#### **Grower**

John Zinke

#### **Irrigation Equipment Supplier**

Western Ag and Turf,  
Madera, CA



Grower John Zinke is a self-professed "one-man operation" in this growing region that is famous for the heart-shaped almond.

## Rain Bird® Micro-Quick™ Sprinklers Continue to Impress California Almond Grower.

After the 2003 harvest, John Zinke made the trip through his orchards on his four-wheeler to perform the annual after-harvest ritual he calls "cleaning up the irrigation system." This involves looking for plugged micro sprinklers and repairing damage from rodents and coyotes. "After harvest is the worst because the ants get into the sprinklers and plug them up," comments John while kneeling down one more time to clear a blocked nozzle. "I had this particular 40 acres (16 hectares) three years ago; the trees were in the 8th leaf, but it was flood irrigated. The first year of production I only got 1,000 pounds to the acre (1,119 kg/ha). Today, I am getting



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2,800 pounds per acre (3,140 kg/ha) because of the new irrigation system, and the fact that I can put fertilizer in the water.”

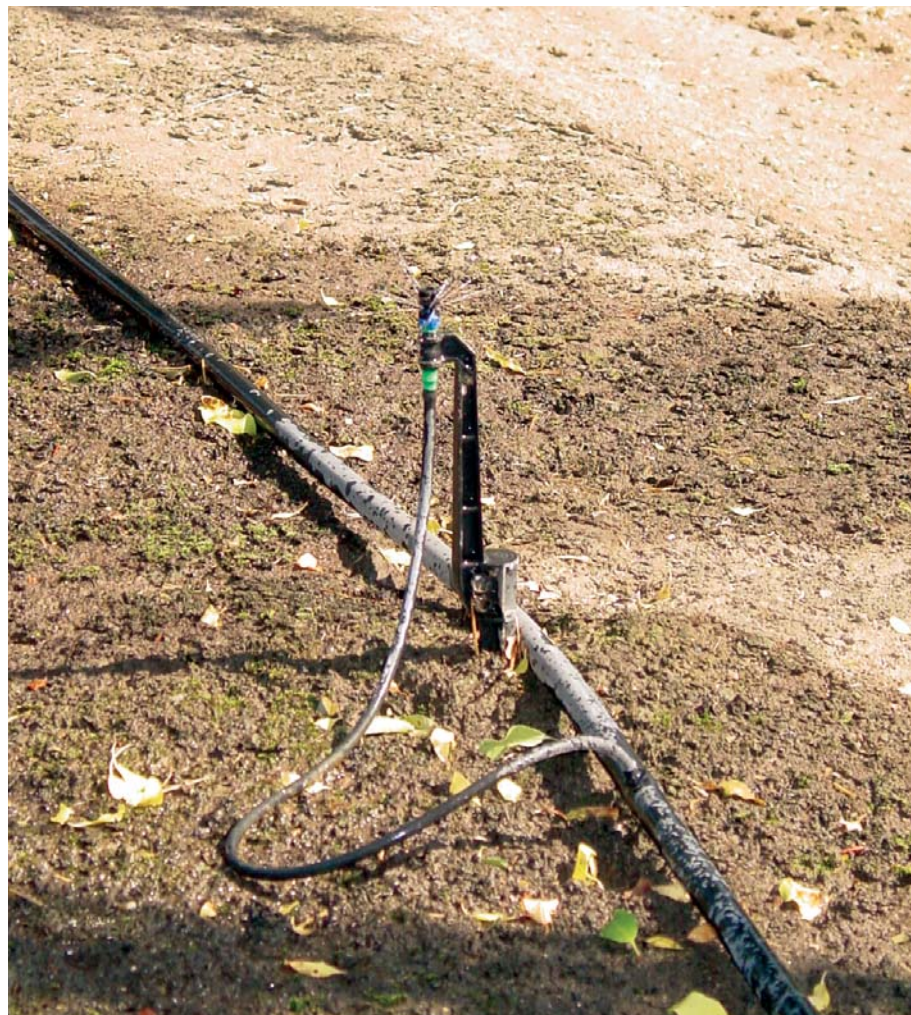
The extra production goes right to the bottom line for John and

***“The first year of production I only got 1,000 pounds to the acre (1,119 kg/ha). Today, I am getting 2,800 pounds per acre (3,140 kg/ha) because of the new irrigation system, and the fact that I can put fertilizer in the water.”***

his father, Harvey Zinke, who jointly run a processing business for the almonds they grow. More production per acre simply means more profit, so John is always searching for ways to become a better grower.

John credits better information and technology for his increased production. “Today, I have a soil analysis and plant tissue evaluation done three times per year and I adjust my chemical application accordingly. I’m using right around two and a quarter acre-feet of water per year, and I watch the water use very carefully so that I don’t spend more in pumping costs than I have to,” said John. What’s also worked to John’s advantage is the performance of Rain Bird® Micro-Quick™ sprinklers.

“The biggest benefit of Rain Bird Micro-Quick is that bugs do not build nests in the sprinklers.” John states that in the spring he’s been in the



*John says that the design of the Micro-Quick with the small clearance between the deflector and the nozzle opening is the reason “Bugs just don’t want to go into that little space, and that is just fine with me.”*

Rain Bird 40-acre block many times and found zero problems with insects. He says that another brand in the next field can easily have between five and 30 sprinklers with some sort of bug problem every time. Most of the time, John is the one who has to clean out the plugged emitters, so he appreciates the fact that Rain Bird Micro-Quick sprinklers dramatically reduce his workload.

“The other main reason I like Rain Bird is that the Micro-Quick is designed so that the pattern (the deflector) is separate from the nozzle.

It’s very easy to clean a plugged nozzle because all you have to do is take the deflector off, then turn the nozzle over in the water stream. This is obviously a feature that had the field laborer in mind, because you don’t have to get into the nozzle outlet with a small wire like you do with the other products.”

The two-deflector design is also a plus with John. “The Rain Bird Micro-Quick actually has two deflectors with each sprinkler, so by simply turning it over you get two patterns.” John uses the





*Matt Angell of Western Ag and Turf consults with John about the importance of accurate control over spray patterns.*

“A - Starburst” pattern for maximum distance, and good close-in coverage at the same time. “I use the A-A deflector with the blue nozzle. I have the same “A” pattern on both sides because when I get some wear in the deflector, I simply turn it over to double the life of the pattern. Getting double the life out of the deflector is a great idea, and really benefits growers who are using gypsum in the water, because gypsum can cause a lot of wear.”

The gypsum (or any other solid material in the water) not only interferes with the deflector pattern,

but also can enlarge or distort the nozzle opening. John states, “With their two-piece design, Rain Bird is the only brand I know of that lets a grower replace either the nozzle or the deflector, so you can replace only what you have to.”

Matt Angell of Western Ag and Turf, a Madera, California irrigation dealer and designer, often specifies the accurate control delivered by Rain Bird Micro-Quick sprinklers. “If a grower needs to keep the water off the tree trunks, we will tell them about the notched pattern, which puts water everywhere around the tree, except on the trunk. The Rain Bird Micro-Quick notched pattern is really the best for this because the hard plastic adapter and the quarter-turn connection means that as long as the stakes are put into

the ground the same way, the pattern will also be the same. A grower can travel down his orchard to check, and it is easy to see if the stakes are all oriented the same.” Angell continues, “Other designs that screw the nozzle into a piece of tubing can have the deflector pointing in any direction after a while, even putting water right on the trunk.”

John is pleased with the level of service he gets from Western Ag and Turf: “Matt and Carl Carlsen are true overachievers.

I’m totally satisfied with their prompt, honest work and good customer service.”

Western is already designing the next 60 acres (24 hectares) of almonds for John, and they are going in with a Rain Bird Micro-Quick blue nozzle/ A-A pattern configuration. John sums it all up by saying, “Of all the

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***This sequence of shots illustrates the simplicity of cleaning a plugged nozzle and demonstrates why John Zinke is so impressed with Rain Bird® Micro-Quick™ sprinklers.***





micro-sprayers, I have the best success with Rain Bird because I hardly ever see insects living in the sprinkler to mess up the pattern. They are also the easiest to clean so they are the most time-efficient. They give a good pattern and last a long time. What else is there?"

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