

State's apple moth program could restart next month

✓ Light Brown Apple moth

Spraying is not part of the plan, officials say

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The state's controversial battle against the pesky light brown apple moth will resume as early as next month, but will not likely involve spraying, the California Department of Food and Agriculture said Friday.

The announcement came with the release of the state's court-ordered report on its apple moth control program, a 1,400-page document that prioritizes less controversial tactics for dealing with the agricultural pest.

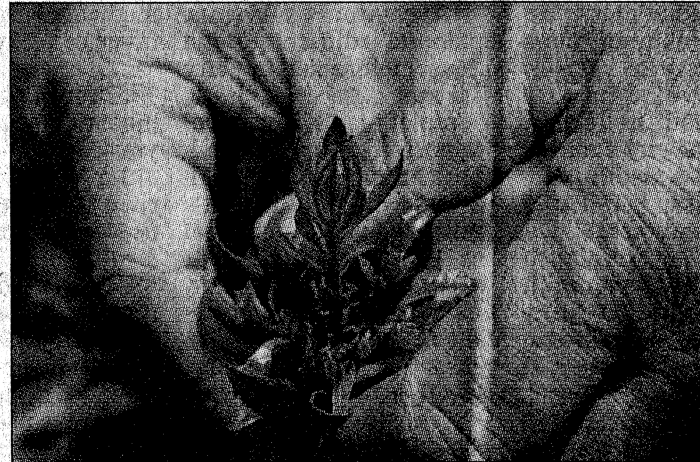
The state eradication effort, which gained widespread visibility when aerial spraying began over the Monterey Bay Area two years ago, has drawn safety concerns from the public. In response to lawsuits, state officials have since halted the program and offered more detailed reviews of their strategy, including Friday's final environmental impact report.

David Dilworth, who led a legal battle for more information, said he's pleased to hear there's no longer immediate plans to spray.

"That sounds like a good start," said Dilworth, a member of Carmel-based HOPE, or Helping Our Peninsula's Environment. "(But) the trouble is that the Department of Agriculture has taught us not to trust them."

The state's program, says the department's acting director of the Division of Plant Health Robert Leavitt, does not entirely rule out spraying.

"That's an alternative. It's not part of our operational plan," he



Chris Pavlos, nursery manager of Soquel Nursery Growers, inspects a California wax myrtle plant damaged by a moth infestation in 2008.

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