Connection of

HIGHLANDS COUNTY CITRUS GROWERS

President's Column by Bert Harris

The 2023-2024 harvest is history. This time last year, we were looking toward better fruit production and higher quality. Rumor is that some of the expectations were met—and others, not so much. Those who remain standing are brushing up on their "rain dance" and looking for favorable summer and fall weather conditions (read: timely rain and no tropical systems of substance).

The big question is whether an investment in the new suite of therapies, both those accessible now and those becoming available very soon, will make a significant bottom line difference through better tree health, less fruit drop and higher internal quality? Will their positive impacts be realized in the short term or will we again be betting on the cumulative affect over multiple seasons?

In our decision-making matrix, there are factors beyond the impacts of Greening - such as other pests & diseases, production input & harvesting costs, and alternative property uses. All will influence our respective decisions to move forward with specific blocs (perhaps our entire operations).

Our growers must also look to the longer-term issues associated with owning agricultural property, and how to best enhance and protect its value. This Association was founded in 1990 – to help agricultural landowners defend their agricultural property rights, protect our land values, and plan for our county's future.

Highlands County, though still agriculturally based, is urbanizing at a rapid rate. County staff will soon begin it's required review and revision of the Highlands County Comprehensive Plan and

Land Development Regulations. These revisions will determine our property values in the near term. Participation in this process is absolutely critical!

APR 2024

- CRAFT Updates
- Cost Share Funding
- CRDF Priorities
- Annual Citrus Conference
- 2024 Farm Bill
- FL Orange Juice Month
- Soil pH
- Landowner Assistance Expo
- HCCGA Newsletter Advertising
- HC Prop. Appraiser Staff
- Citrus Expo
- USDA Crop Forecast
- HCCGA Member Directory
- Diaprepes Root Weevil
- HCCGA Golf Day

Frankly, local elected officials and staff have not historically knowingly created problems for landowners. However, some unintended consequences of policy creation or modification have resulted in "issues" impacting our properties and values. Your Association will be right in the middle of this process ensuring that our collective voices are clearly heard.

This local focus is the primary reason that our Association has been strongly supported by our members. I can assure you that preserving our property rights and values will remain at the heart of our mission. Do not hesitate to contact Ray at the HCCGA office with your questions.

Bert Harris III



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> www.hccga.com admin@hccga.com

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2024 Calendar of Events

June 11

Landowner Assistance Expo @ Bert J. Harris Ag Center

June 12-14

Annual Citrus Conference @ Bonita Springs

August 21-22

Citrus Expo @ Florida State Fairgrounds in Tampa

November 12-14

Ag-Venture @ Highlands County Fairgrounds

December 7

HCCGA Citrus Fun Shoot



For additional information about any of these meetings or events, contact Ray or Jan at the HCCGA office



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Executive Director & Report BYRAYROYCE

Just a reminder that our Association is in place to assist its members, grower and associate alike, across a wide range of activities. So if you need some information or perhaps assistance facilitating a contact – citrus related or otherwise, just let me know. Also, if you know of someone that was a member of one of the other regionals that is no longer in operation that might benefit from associate membership in HCCGA – please refer them to me.

Florida Citrus Mutual is putting together another great Annual Citrus Conference in Bonita Springs, and I encourage everyone to think about participating. They have planned a very informative set of educational seminars, and there will also be multiple industry meetings you can participate in - not to mention the fellowship and information sharing aspects of gathering with others in our industry.

It seems very likely that **CRAFT** will be able to implement a Cycle Six of their program in the summer of 2024. So growers should consider having a conversation with Tamara or Tina in that office now about how CRAFT may be able to play a role in your operation, either through helping plant new trees or cost share for existing grove production therapies once the funding is announced.

It also appears that the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is going to have significantly more resources to expend for cost sharing agricultural land projects in our area over the next several years than they have historically. So see the info in this newsletter on how to contact that office for additional information.

We had a beautiful afternoon for golf on April 25th for our annual HCCGA Golf Day. You can see who won in their respective flights and various hole contests in this issue of the newsletter. Thank you to all that participated and those many companies that sponsored parts of this event, especially our friends at **Heartland National Bank.**

National OJ Day on May 4th provided a great reminder of the power of social media (such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and various blogs) in today's world. In the days leading up to the 4th, and especially on National OJ Day, there were countless posts celebrating Florida citrus, and the responses from folks not involved in the industry were very encouraging to see. We all need to be continually active in these venues, sharing the nutritional and health benefits of our products with the general public, while proactively taking a role in helping to promote our wonderful products!

We have started the preliminary production work associated with the 2024 HCCGA Annual Member Directory. Members should send in their contact and bio info update sheets just as soon as possible after you receive them later this month, so the proper information can be published in this widely utilized year round resource tool. Associate members may also want to enhance your presence in this year's directory through advertising. If you have any questions, or need additional information, contact Ray or Jan at the HCCGA office.

Please save Saturday, December 7th on your calendar for our annual HCCGA Citrus Sporting Clays Fun Shoot. We have traditionally held our shoot on the 2nd Saturday of December, but this year due to several factors we are moving it up a week to Dec. 7th. I anticipate being able to share some exciting news about the location of this year's shoot in the next several weeks, but please make plans to join us on Dec. 7th for some great outdoor recreation and fellowship including our traditional prime rib and seafood luncheon.

Our goal is to keep our members as informed as possible on a wide range of issues, so please never hesitate in contacting me day or night (cell: 863-381-8551) for additional information if you need it; or if I can be of assistance in any matter, large or small.

Thanks, Ray

Info Notes

2023-2024 Florida Minimum Wage

Just a reminder that the third increase dictated by the 2020 constitutional amendment, raised Florida's minimum wage rate to \$12 an hour on September 30th. The voter-approved amendment will gradually lead to a \$15-an-hour minimum wage on September 30, 2026.

2023 Citrus Expo Presentations

The educational seminars at the 2023 Citrus Expo are now available online at: https://crec.ifas.ufl.edu/citrus-research/presentations/citrus-expo-2023/.

2023-2024 Florida Citrus Production Guides

The 2023-2024 Florida Citrus Production Guides are available to pick up at the UF/IFAS Highlands County Extension office or the handbooks are available online (with printable sections) at:

https://crec.ifas.ufl.edu/resources/production-guide/.

2023 Florida Citrus Growers' Institute Presentations Online

The 2023 Florida Citrus Growers' Institute was held on April 4th at the South Florida State College Avon Park campus. The educational presentations were recorded and are available online at the citrus agent's website: Here you will also find PDF versions of the slides.

https://citrusagents.ifas.ufl.edu/archived-presentations/2023/

UF/IFAS Podcasts for Growers

UF/IFAS and Southeast AgNet have partnered to provide the latest news on citrus-related research in a monthly "All in for Citrus" podcast. The podcasts feature short interviews with scientists working to find solutions to citrus greening and other devastating citrus diseases. The podcast complements the new research update website and citrus newsletter at: http://citrusresearch.ifas.ufl.edu/newsletter-sign-up/. Podcasts may be downloaded to your mobile phone, tablet or computer to be listened to at your convenience.

"Florida OJ Break" License Tags

The HCCGA office has a very good supply of the "Take A Florida Orange Juice Break" license plates to share. Please feel free to stop by the HCCGA office and get one for your vehicles. We also have a limited supply of a few other types of OJ related tags.

Sales Tax Exemption Forms for Ag Uses

Florida Farm Bureau has a very informative page on their website that lists a number of potential agriculturally related items that may be exempt from sales tax. It also contains a recommended exemption form to be utilized. It can be found at: https://www.floridafarmbureau.org/agricultural-sales-tax-exemptions-in-florida/

UF/IFAS Research Website

The updated Citrus Research and Education Center (CREC) website at https://crec.ifas.ufl.edu/citrus-research is now live. The revamped site has the latest research information on HLB management, detailed information on rootstock trials, access to on-line presentations from UF/IFAS research scientists, EDIS documents sorted by topic for easy access, and more.

UF/IFAS OJ Break Programs

The central Florida UF/IFAS citrus extension agents are providing an OJ Break Grower meeting series in a twice monthly virtual program format. Upon registration you will be sent a Zoom link for each meeting. To see the upcoming meeting topics and register for the Zoom notice – go to: https://citrusagents.ifas.ufl.edu/oj-break/.

Restricted Use Pesticide Exams

Restricted Use Pesticide exams are done using laptops at most UF/IFAS county Extension offices. Whether you are taking the test for the first time, renewing your license, or adding a new category, you can take your exam at most county Extension offices. In Highlands County, the Extension office is scheduling exams for Wednesdays and Fridays. You can schedule your exam online at https://pesticideexam.ifas.ufl.edu/public/countyList.faces.

FDOC Webinars

The Florida Department of Citrus hosts monthly webinars in order to provide key information on various topics important to the Florida Citrus industry. To receive notifications on webinars and other topics, please e-mail <code>news@citrus.myflorida.com</code> and ask to be added to FDOC's email distribution list.



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CRAFT Program Updates



Over the past five years, the Citrus Research and Field Trials (CRAFT) Foundation has worked with Florida growers across 17 counties to develop more than 1,400 grower-drive research trials.

Coming into 2024, CRAFT had 1,290 traditional, new planting projects representing nearly 10,000 acres of newly planted Florida citrus trees. An additional 1,064 projects accounting for approximately 74,000 acres had been enrolled in the Existing Tree Therapies (ETT) program, looking at novel therapies on mature trees.

After the March 2024 CRAFT Board meeting, a total of 118 additional new planting projects, adding more than 5,500 acres to the program total were approved. These projects join the 11 previously approved PEP new planting projects covering an additional 455 acres to make up CRAFT Cycle Five. All Cycle Five projects must be fully planted no later than June 30, 2025.

Between traditional new plantings and the ETT program, CRAFT now has a total of 1,419 projects covering more than 90,000 acres of Florida citrus.

The CRAFT Board of Directors recently voted to amend all of the Existing Tree Therapies (ETT) agreements, allowing Payment 2 to be released to growers earlier than originally stated.

The Board recognizes and understands the challenges currently facing growers related to maintaining their operations and the funding available to do so, and as such as elected to release Payment 2 following the second application or injection of approved treatments within their CRAFT ETT projects rather than waiting until the harvest following the second treatment is complete.

Staff have drafted amendments for all ETT contracts and are sending them out via email from Tamara Wood to each grower participant. If you have not received your contract amendments by Friday, May 17th, please reach out to CRAFT staff.

Following the amendment, the required steps for payment 2 to be released are:

- First year's application of approved treatment.
- Harvest of fruit following first application of approved treatment.
- Submittal of first year's required treatment and harvest data to survey provided by CRAFT Foundation. Inc.
- Second year's application of approved treatment.
- Submittal of second year's required treatment data to survey provided by CRAFT Foundation, Inc.
- Submittal of claim form, found at the back of your contract.

Once you have signed and returned your amendment(s), please visit https://craftfdn.org/craft-data-entry/ to enter any required data that you may have outstanding. All of the ETT surveys can be found on the CRAFT website under the "CRAFT Data Entry" tab, you can access those at any time to enter the data.

See CRAFT on page 6

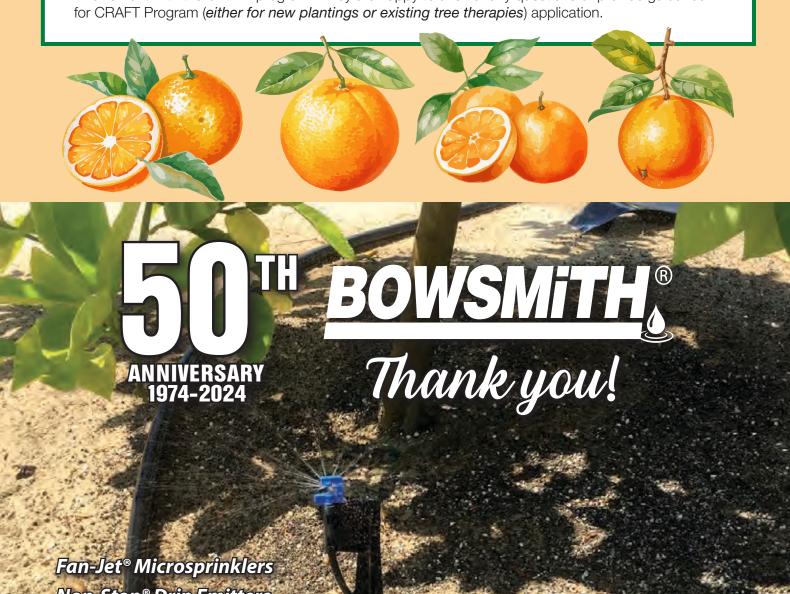
CRAFT, Con't from page 5

If you are entering data related to a traditional CRAFT new planting project, that data must be submitted through the CRAFT-USDA Data Portal directly. If you have any questions about how to do that, please contact Tina Buice at tina@craftfdn.org.

If you have any questions at all about the timing of payments or requirements, please do not hesitate to contact Tamara Wood at tamara@craftfdn.org or Tina Buice at tina@craftfdn.org.

CRAFT has applied for additional funding to continue to develop the program, and if successful in our requests, will plan to open the application windows sometime in late summer 2024. Additional information on future cycles will be shared as it becomes available.

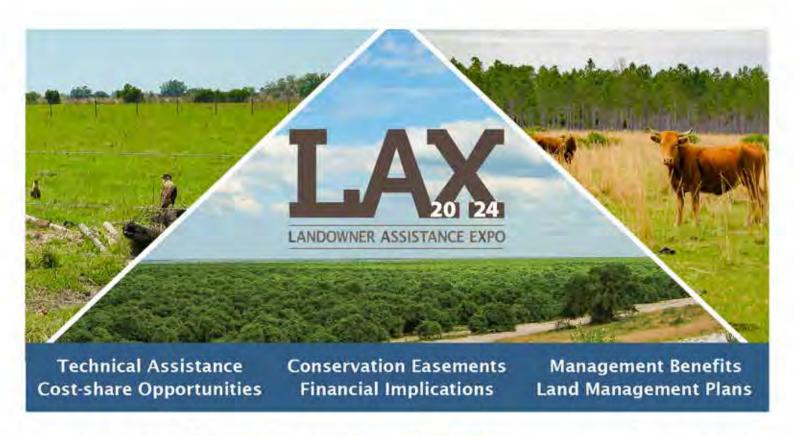
Growers are encouraged to contact Tamara or Tina if they have any questions about potential involvement with the CRAFT program - they are happy to answer any questions or provide guidance for CRAFT Program (either for new plantings or existing tree therapies) application.



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Tuesday June 11, 2024

8:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Bert J. Harris Jr. Agricultural Center Auditorium 4509 George Boulevard - Sebring, FL 33875

Lunch will be served by the Highlands County Soil & Water Conservation District



Register at https://LAX-2024.eventbrite.com or contact Sheila McNamara for more information: 352-678-7015 or smcnamara@cfrpc.org

Landowners, regardless of acreage size, in DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, Okeechobee, Osceola and Polk Counties are invited to participate in conversations related to technical assistance, cost-share opportunities, conservation easements, and the financial implications of each program. Outreach representatives will be on hand to provide brief overviews of local, State, Federal and non-governmental programs and receive feedback from attendees.





Public participation is solicited without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, disability, income, or family status. Persons who require special accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act or persons who require translation services (free of charge) should contact the CFRPC Title VI/Nondiscrimination Coordinator, Brenda Torres, 863-534-7130, or via Florida Relay Service 711, or by email: btorres@cfrpc.org at least three (3) days before the workshop.

NRCS Cost Share Funding

Agricultural property owners should consider contacting the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Sebring Field Office about the potential for cost share assistance across a broad set of resource protection and enhancement categories. The local NRCS contact is Carlos Torres, whose office is located in the Bert J. Harris Ag Center at 4505 George Blvd. The office phone number is (863) 385-7853.

The great staff (*including Executive Director Susie Bishop*) in the Highlands Soil & Water Conservation District office, housed in the same office location, may also be able to help provide some guidance about potential funding opportunities, both with NRCS and other agencies, if you have trouble reaching Carlos. Their office number is (863) 402-7020.

Apparently NRCS's federal funding for projects will double or even triple in the next year or so – so there should be significant funding opportunities out there within several different programs. Also always keep in mind that even if there is not an existing program that your ideas for cost sharing funding may fit neatly into – you can always propose an idea for funding assistance for consideration. They at times can make some unique things work out.

However, it is a lengthy process to acquire NRCS cost share so you want to get started in the coming months in order to meet an application deadline sometime this coming November 2024 for approval consideration in the late spring of 2025.

Start each day the citrus way!





602 McKean Street Auburndale, FL 33823 Office (863) 965-5302 Fax (863) 965-5966

Dean Evans (863) 287-2251 Keith Hinkle (863) 381-1735 Mike Whitney (863) 581-3674

CRDF Priorities

During its April meeting, the Citrus Research and Development Foundation (CRDF) board of directors passed its preliminary budget for the next fiscal year. It allows for \$1.4 million in new project funding.

"This amount should be enough to fund the projects the board wishes to fund from our primary request for proposals, which are aimed at answering practical questions growers have regarding the systemic delivery of bactericides, as well as other obligations already on the books," said Rick Dantzler, CRDF chief operating officer. "We won't have the reserves we always have, but with things as dire in the industry as they are, we didn't think now was the time to hold back."

Numerous other projects were funded, including a project with Silvec Biologics. This company bought the citrus tristeza virus vectoring technology from Southern Gardens and is attempting to get it approved by regulators. There is a repayment clause included if a commercial product results from this research.

An additional year of funding was granted to the following researchers:

- Kirsten Pelz-Stelinski, an entomologist with UF/IFAS, to study the effects of trunk-injected oxytetracycline (OTC) on psyllid pathogenicity and vector populations
- Ute Albrecht, UF/IFAS associate professor of plant pathology, for research on the application of different rates of OTC
- Kim Bowman, U.S. Department of Agriculture scientist, to finish his work on developing SuperSour rootstocks

The board sent back to the CRDF Research Management Committee a project by Mark Ritenour, UF/IFAS professor of post-harvest technology, which is testing new grapefruit rootstock and scion combinations. There were questions about the data being collected.

The board funded another year of data collection on a grove that has had back-to-back injections of OTC to measure if there is backslide during the off year. Trees that receive a third year of treatment will be compared to trees that do not.

Annual Citrus Conference

The 2024 Florida Citrus Industry Annual Conference will take place on June 12th-14th at the Hyatt Regency Coconut Point Resort in Bonita Springs. Florida Citrus Mutual has planned another great conference that will include informative educational sessions and a number of industry meetings for growers and associated partners to participate in.

Conference registration is now open and you can also reserve your hotel room. Visit Florida Citrus Mutual's new website at https://www.flcitrusmutual.com. in order to learn more about the conference, view the schedule of events and register to attend.

There will also be a number of fellowship events to enjoy, and this is an extremely family friendly event and venue if you have not attended the conference at the Hyatt Regency Coconut Point Resort and Spa before.

If you plan to play in the Florida Citrus Mutual Golf Tournament on Friday, June 14, be sure to sign-up when you register for the conference. This year's tournament will be held at the Saltleaf Golf Preserve and it is \$150 per golfer to play.

Farm Bill Frameworks Favorable for Citrus

Recently, Glenn "GT" Thompson, chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture, unveiled an outline of the bipartisan policies and priorities of the 2024 farm bill. The legislation, scheduled to be marked up by the U.S. House of Representatives' Committee on Agriculture on May 23, holds the key to crucial resources for various agricultural commodities, including Florida's citrus industry. On the same day, U.S. Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow unveiled the Senate Rural Prosperity and Food Security Act.

Support provided through this legislation is of the utmost importance to the long-term sustainability of the citrus industry. This is a significant step toward moving agricultural policy and investments through Congress.

Several priorities that align with Florida Citrus Mutual's continued advocacy efforts to combat citrus greening and sustain the industry's viability are included in the outline. Florida Citrus Mutual will continue to champion these and other components outlined in this version of the 2024 farm bill:

- Increased mandatory funding for the Specialty Crop Research Initiative. This funding is critical to supporting innovative research, especially as the Florida citrus industry works to combat citrus greening and rebuild the state's signature crop.
- \$25 million per year for the Emergency Citrus Disease Research and Extension Program to continue to support vital research efforts to mitigate the impacts of citrus diseases.
- The development of the Specialty Crop Mechanization and Automation Research and Development Program to support competitive grants for research and Extension activities to advance and accelerate specialty crop mechanization and automation.
- Reform of the Tree Assistance Program (TAP) to, among other things, eliminate the 15% tree
 mortality requirement, extend to two years the timeframe for tree replacement or rehabilitation
 activities, and clarify that a TAP recipient may use assistance to replant using alternative varieties,
 crops, stand density and location.
- Updates to eligibility requirements for adjusted gross income limitations to better accommodate producers of specialty and other high-value crops and provide exceptions in the disaster programs when producers experience a severe decline in production.

Source: Florida Citrus Mutual









Collaborating with Growers to **Develop Programs for Their Needs**

or more than 15 years, we've been helping citrus growers combat disease and reduce copper toxicity in the soil with our low-active ingredient copper sulphate pentahydrate. Research by Dr. Kelly Morgan, a Professor of Soil Fertility and Water Management with UF/IFAS, has confirmed that buildup of copper in the soil greatly reduces yields for growers.

We take pride in collaborating with growers to develop programs aimed at their specific needs. An example of this is our work with Clermont-based McLean Family Farms in their battle against citrus canker and HLB. The family grows organic citrus, along with peaches and vegetables. The family also produces Uncle Matt's organic orange juice.

The McLeans applied Magna-Bon CS 2005, which is Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI)-listed for organic production, in combination with KeyPlex 350 OR. According to Ben McLean III, the products provide "significant benefits" in helping reduce canker symptoms and improved micronutrient deficiencies.

"Overall, what we saw was an increase in the health and productivity of the grove," says McLean III. "There was a significant visual improvement in the health and color of the grove."

Ben's dad, Benny McLean Jr., who heads the family farm and is also Production Manager of Uncle Matt's Organic (headed by his other son, Matt) says he noticed a difference in "the look" of the grove after only two days of the first application.

"The leaf color was the biggest thing that stood out," he adds, noting the farm has used Magna-Bon CS 2005 in other growing areas, but this was the first time it was ever used in this orange grove.

We are proud to partner with USDA and UF/IFAS by donating product to help these organizations with their can-

ker management programs. We also support the regional tradeshows, conferences,



and various associations throughout the state all year long. If you see us at a show, make sure to stop by and say hello!





CS 2005

Our copper sulfate pentahydrate in-solution formula is OMRI-listed with systemic capabilities! It's environmentally friendly by using less than an 1/16 lb to 1/8 lb per acre of metallic copper specifically designed to combat agricultural disease in Citrus including:

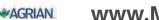
Brown Rot, Greasy Spot, Pink Pitting, Scab, Melanose & Citrus Canker!

Canker Control Trails in Grapefruit & Hamlin Oranges

Citrus Research & Education Center: UF/IFAS Dr. Jim Graham



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Florida OJ Month

The Highlands County Board of County Commissioners declared the month of May to be Florida Orange Juice Month in the Highlands County (the only county in Florida to do so) during their May 7th Board meeting with a proclamation.



The Effect of Soil pH on Nutrient Availability

By Chris Oswalt

Soil pH influences nutrient availability. This article considers the specific fate of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium in soils with elevated pH values. The discussion also assumes that these effects would be similar to conditions in the wetted zone where micro-sprinkler irrigation has raised soil pH.

NITROGEN

Soil pH can affect several reactions involving nitrogen in the soil solution and the efficient use of this nitrogen by plants. Nitrification, the conversion of ammonium to nitrite and nitrate, is done by soil bacteria and is most rapid in soils with a pH between 7 and 8. The process of nitrification in the soil slows down at a soil pH of 5 or less. If a grower is using ammonium nitrate as a nitrogen source, then at a pH between 7 and 8, this ammonium nitrate would be rapidly converted to nitrate.

This would make the nitrogen applied significantly susceptible to leaching due to the quick conversion of the ammoniacal nitrogen to the more soluble nitrate form. At a lower soil pH, the ammonium in this ammonium nitrate would be more slowly converted to nitrate due to the reduced activity of soil bacteria. This reduction in the ammonium-to-nitrate conversion rate results in more nitrogen remaining in the ammonium form, which is less susceptible to leaching.

Also, soils with elevated pH values can cause nitrogen loss due to the atmosphere's volatilization of ammonia. This nitrogen volatilization loss occurs when ammoniacal nitrogen sources are applied to a soil surface with pH values greater than 7. In the management of nitrogen applied to soils, when pH values are above 7, there is a more significant loss of nitrogen when ammonium forms of nitrogen are used.

Growers can better manage these potential ammoniacal nitrogen losses by lowering the soil pH to slow the conversion to nitrate and reduce volatilization. Volatilization can also be reduced by incorporating this ammoniacal nitrogen in the soil by cultivation or irrigation. Using irrigation to incorporate ammonium forms of nitrogen in high-pH soil can result in additional leaching due to faster conversion of this ammonium to nitrate or nitrite by soil bacteria.

PHOSPHORUS

The availability of phosphorus in calcareous soils is also limited. The amount of phosphorus in soil is closely related to the availability of this phosphorus to plants. In high-pH soils, phosphorus reacts with soil calcium, resulting in a decreased solubility and availability of phosphorus (a process called

See SOIL pH on page 14





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SOIL pH, Con't from page 13

phosphorus fixation). In this situation, phosphorus availability is determined by the amount of soluble phosphorus applied and any phosphorus released from that fixed phosphorus. Application of soluble phosphorus in these soils will only be available to plants for a short time due to the rapid phosphorus fixation at high soil pH. Lowering the soil pH to a range of about 6.5 to 7.2 will decrease the amount of fixed phosphorus, resulting in the availability of previously insoluble phosphorus.

POTASSIUM

Availability of potassium in high-pH soils is difficult to achieve due to the occupation of the nutrient-holding sites of the soil particle surface by excessive calcium. The occupation of these exchangeable soil particle sites will suppress potassium uptake by citrus trees due to competition between calcium and potassium for the exchangeable soil particle sites.

Although potassium would typically be available for plant uptake at a higher soil pH, the competition with soil calcium can negate this availability. Lowering the soil pH in this situation will reduce the exchangeable sites of the soil particle that could be occupied by potassium or other basic cations (calcium and magnesium). This would result in the release of potassium and other basic cations, making it more likely that leaching could affect the soil levels of these nutrients.

HLB-AFFECTED TREES

Huanglongbing (HLB)-affected trees tend to have smaller and weaker root systems when compared with healthy trees. Even though this increases nutrient deficiency and stress on the plant, the roots are still functional. Nutrient uptake and soil pH are of utmost importance to ensure tree health.

The optimal soil pH for effective Florida citrus production ranges from 5.8 to 6.5. Research suggests that pH ranging between 6 and 6.5 can help increase the availability of potassium, phosphorus, calcium, manganese, zinc and iron in the soil. Even though a lower pH seems to benefit HLB-affected trees more than healthy trees, the pH of your soil should not be lower than 5.

COPPER CONSIDERATIONS

One caveat to consider when determining the best soil pH level for your groves is the presence and amount of soil copper. Copper toxicity can become a problem in soils with high levels of copper or when the soil pH is lowered, making this soil copper more available. A case in point would be soil pH ranges of 6.5 to 7. These higher levels of soil copper are biologically nonreactive and tied up by the soil. When the soil pH is reduced, it can release bound copper, causing copper toxicity problems without a change in the amount of copper in the soil.

Remember, the measure of soil pH is the negative log of the hydrogen ion concentration and is a logarithmic function. Hence, a decrease of one pH unit is a 10-fold increase in acidity, and a 2-unit drop would be a 100-fold increase in soil acidity.

Chris Oswalt is a UF/IFAS Citrus Extension agent for Polk and Hillsborough counties.



Landowner Assistance Expo

The Highlands Soil and Water Conservation District has partnered with the Central Florida Regional Planning Council to put together the Landowner Assistance Expo which will be held at the Bert J. Harris Agricultural Center Auditorium in Sebring on Tuesday, June 11, 2024, from 8:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Landowners, regardless of acreage, in DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, Okeechobee, Osceola and Polk Counties are invited to participate in conversations related to technical assistance, cost-share opportunities, conservation easements, and the financial implications of each program. Outreach representatives will be on hand to provide brief overviews of local, State, Federal and non-governmental programs and receive feedback from attendees.

Lunch will be provided by the Highlands SWCD. Registration is required. Contact Sheila McNamara for additional information at (352) 678-7015 or *smcnamara@cfrpc.org*, or go to: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/landowners-assistance-expo-2024-tickets-878399094337?utm-campaign=social&utm-content=attendeeshare&utm-medium=discovery&utm-term=listing&utm-source=cp&aff=ebdsshcopyurl.

HCCGA Citrus Connection Newsletter Advertising

HCCGA produces our monthly newsletter at the completion of each month, and it is published shortly thereafter. The ads you see in this newsletter are what make it possible for it to be produced and distributed, both in hard copy and electronically. In addition to our membership mailing list, the newsletter is also sent to our entire electronic contact list, which includes firms associated with other agricultural enterprises and is archived for at least one year on the Association's Website: www.hccga.com.

So if you would like more information about how to advertise with the Association, or would like to place an insertion order, contact Ray or Jan at the HCCGA office. Below are our advertising rates:

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Half Page - Full Color	\$ 200.00 - per month
Half Page - Black & White	\$ 150.00 - per month
Third Page - Full Color	\$ 1,500.00 - one year/12 issues
Third Page - Full Color	\$ 900.00 - six months/6 issues
Business Card - Full Color	\$ 500.00 - one year/12 issues
Business Card - Black & White	\$ 400.00 - one year/12 issues
Business Card - Full Color	\$ 350.00 - six months/6 issues
Business Card - Black & White	\$ 250.00 - six months/6 issues

^{**} Third page & Business card size ads must be placed for a minimum of six months.

^{**} Half & Full page ads must be placed for a minimum of three months.

HC Property Appraisers Office Staff Update

Property owners in Highlands County have been very fortunate over the years to have a very professional staff in our county's Property Appraiser's office. The Property Appraiser, Raymond McIntyre, and his Ag division staff have always been very receptive to working with property owners in order to make sure that their property was properly assessed according to its use and productive valuation.

One of those key staff members, Tom Andrews, is retiring at the end of May after 25+ years as an agriculture appraiser. First of all, thank you Tom for your years of service to our county and the agricultural community that you have always been so willing to work with. We appreciate your proactive work, night and day, ensuring that each property owner had the opportunity to share information in order to make sure that their properties were being assessed correctly according to the law. Best wishes in your retirement!

So if you have been working with Tom – now you should contact **Sam Klatt** (Agriculture Supervisor) for any questions concerning Ag property classification or assessment valuation. His contact info is: Office (863) 402-6667, Cell (863) 446-2442 and E-mail *sklatt@hcpao.org*.

Remember to keep the Property Appraisers office updated each and every year as to the conditions in your groves and/or other Ag properties to ensure that they are assessed properly. You should also contact them if you are contemplating any changes in the use of an Ag property (*prior to the change*) to make sure that you fully understand how such changes may impact the assessment of that parcel.

Mark Your Calendars Now for Citrus Expo 2024

The Citrus and Specialty Crop Expo 2024 is scheduled for **August 21st & 22nd**, so please reserve these dates on your calendar. The 2024 Expo will be held at the Florida State Fairgrounds in Tampa again this year. Registration is now open at: https://citrusexpo.net/2024-citrus-specialty-crop-expo-attendee-registration/?fref=feacf6bd-efdd-4354-bf84-ea4675064fe4&em=cnJveWNIQGhjY2dhLmNvbQ--&utm_campaign=CE+Attendee+Registration+Open.

Begun in 1992, the Citrus Expo has grown to become the world's premier seminar and trade show program for citrus growers and industry professionals. The two-day event is organized and operated by AgNet Media/Citrus Industry Magazine with solicited input from numerous growers, researchers and industry organizations.

The event's primary purpose is to provide unequalled education and industry fellowship opportunities annually for growers, industry leaders, decision-makers and vendors. It has become an important venue for growers to share ideas and learn about what's working in citrus groves to fight HLB and other challenges.

Grower input is strongly encouraged throughout the Expo educational seminar planning process, which will get started very soon. So please email your Citrus Expo topic and/or speaker suggestions to either *rroyce@hccga.com* or CitrusExpo@AgNetMedia.com.

USDA Citrus Crop Forecast Update May 10, 2024

All Oranges 17.8 Million Boxes

The 2023-2024 Florida all orange forecast released on May 10th by the USDA Agricultural Statistics Board is lowered one million boxes to 17.8 million boxes. If realized, this will be 13 percent more than last season's final production. The forecast consists of 6.80 million boxes of non-Valencia oranges (early, mid-season, and Navel varieties) and 11.0 million boxes of Valencia oranges.

Non-Valencia Oranges 6.80 Million Boxes

The forecast of non-Valencia orange production remains at 6.80 million boxes. The Navel forecast, included in the non-Valencia portion of the forecast at 180,000 boxes is 3 percent of the non-Valencia total.



Valencia Oranges 11.0 Million Boxes

The forecast of Valencia orange production is lowered one million boxes to 11.0 million boxes. The Row Count survey conducted April 29-30, 2024, indicated 97 percent of the Valencia rows are harvested. Processors were surveyed regarding fruit processed through April 30th and the estimated quantity remaining to be processed to the end of the season. Analysis of the results of the processors survey support decreasing the Valencia orange forecast.

All Grapefruit 1.80 Million Boxes

The forecast of all grapefruit production is 1.80 million boxes. The white grapefruit forecast is 250,000 boxes. The red grapefruit forecast is 1.55 million boxes. The Row Count survey, conducted April 29-30, 2024, indicated harvest on grapefruit is relatively complete.

Tangerines and Tangelos 500,000 Boxes

The forecast for tangerines and tangelos is unchanged at 500,000 boxes. This forecast number includes all certified tangerine and tangelo varieties.



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CRAFT's mission is to move lab and research solutions into commercial groves for commercial-scale field trials, collect data on the results of those field trials and create an integrated data management system allowing growers, researchers and other interested parties to analyze the efficacy and efficiency of various strategies, treatments and therapies.

For additional information, contact Tamara Wood - 863.698.9276 or tamara@craftfdn.org

2024 HCCGA Annual Member Directory

We are starting preliminary production work on our 2024 Annual Grower & Associate Member Directory. This year we plan to have the Directory distributed to Association members in late July. This booklet has become a valuable resource guide for our members, grower and associate alike. This year's directory will include Association information such as: Grower contact information, Associate Member Bios, Sponsorship Recognitions, Board Members, Officers, etc.

All members (especially associates) should make sure that they complete and return the informational form that will be mailed out to all current members in mid-May. If you do not receive a letter about the member directory, please let us know.

The directory serves as a valuable year-round resource guide for all of our members, and it behooves associate members to have the proper biographical and contact information available in the publication. Having your updated contact information included in this Directory is a must!

Now is the time for members to think about taking advantage of the advertising opportunities (at the same pricing levels as the past several years) that this Directory provides. An advertising rate sheet will be included in the mailing that all members should receive. There are several different advertising options available: quarter (\$200.00), half (\$300.00) and full page (\$450.00) black and white ads and a limited number of half page (\$400.00) and full page (\$600.00) color ads. Contact Jan or Ray at the HCCGA office at (863) 385-8091 or admin@hccga.com if you would like additional information about advertising pricing or acquiring an enhanced presence in this year's Directory.







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Where to Watch for Diaprepes Root Weevil

By Larry Duncan

Prior to the introduction of citrus greening disease in Florida, certain conventions applied to the occurrence and impact of diaprepes root weevil in groves across the state. The abundance and damage potential of this major pest were greatest in some Flatwoods habitats, such as parts of the inland East Coast where newly planted trees sustained major damage. By contrast, weevil infestations on the Central Ridge were often not detected for many years until mature trees suddenly declined due to continuous damage to roots by relatively small numbers of weevil larvae.

These regional differences resulted from better conditions for weevil population growth and less ability of trees to tolerate root damage in wetter Flatwoods soils, combined with better conditions for native, insect-killing nematodes to prey on weevil larvae in the coarser sands of the Central Ridge.

Unfortunately, by destroying much of the fibrous root system, citrus greening has reduced the ability of trees to tolerate additional root loss, even by the relatively fewer weevil larvae typically encountered on the Ridge.

Root weevil integrated pest management, which can be found at: https://citrusindustry.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/CG006.pdf employs cultural practices, rootstock selection and insecticides/ovicides when weevils are observed feeding on new leaf flush, mating and laying eggs in the tree canopy. Chemical or physical barriers on the soil surface or insect-killing nematodes can be employed to reduce the numbers of larvae damaging roots.

When weevil populations are abundant, sighting adults in the canopy and the typically ragged leaf margins created by their feeding can signal the need for management. However, when weevils are few, these signs may not be apparent. That is why it is always good practice to take every opportunity to examine the root systems of citrus trees for symptoms that can indicate damage from insects, nematodes orphytophthora.

When resetting, replanting or diagnosing problems in groves, take the time to use a simple pump-up sprayer to wash some of the major roots of excavated trees to determine whether the typical root channeling caused by larval feeding indicates the need to manage the citrus root weevil.

Larry Duncan is a professor at the UF/IFAS CREC in Lake Alfred.







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2024 HCCGA Golf Day

The Highlands County Citrus Growers Association's annual golf tournament took place on Thursday, April 25th, at the SUN 'N LAKE Golf Club in Sebring with 88 golfers taking to the links for a great afternoon of fellowship and outdoor recreation.

Thanks to our friends at **Heartland National Bank** for being the title sponsor of this event again this year. We also appreciate **Highlands County Commissioner Chris Campbell** for his sponsorship of the pre-play luncheon and post play hors d'oeuvres, and **Syngenta** for their sponsorship of the roving beverage cart again this year.

A burger bar luncheon preceded the 1:00 PM tee off, there was plenty of liquid refreshments on the course and participants enjoyed some great post play hors d'oeuvres as the hole contests and flight winners were announced and raffle drawing prizes were given away.

Our friends at **Duke Energy** and **Diamond R Fertilizer** sponsored the pre-play tune up driving range and putting green respectively. A best ball 4-player scramble format was used for tournament scoring, and the 22 foursomes were divided into three flights with each player assigned an A, B, C or D handicap level for the "Closest-to-the-Line", "Long Drive", and "Closest-to-the-Pin" competitions. Each contest winner received a \$50.00 **Cowpokes Watering Hole Restaurant** gift certificate.

Winning the closest-to-the-line contests, sponsored by **Magna Bon II** in their respective groups were **Curtis Donovan** for A & B players and **Chad Gillyard** for C & D players.

The long drive contests, sponsored by **HC Commissioner Scott Kirouac** and **Harvey's Fertilizer & Chemical**, were won by **Jerry Whidden** in the A & B players group and **Chris Campbell** in the C & D players group.

Winning the closest-to-the-pin contest, sponsored by **Carlson Accounting** and **M.E. Stephens & Sons Fruit Company** in their respective groups was **Tony Bassett** for A & B players and **John Dean** for C & D players.

Flight winning teams received four \$75.00 gift certificates and second place team members each received \$50.00 gift certificates, all for redemption at the **Cowpokes Watering Hole Restaurant**.

In Flight #1, the Hancock Citrus team of Bud Wester, Dave Schumacher, Deante Drayton and Matt Moye took top honors with a -13 score of 59. Finishing second in the flight was the South State Bank team of Paul Gerrard, Omar DeJesus, Rusty Mouton and Michael Baragona with a score of 60.

Winning Flight #2 with a -10 score of **62** was the **HC County Commissioner Chris Campbell** team of **Chris Campbell**, **Eric Cord**, **Curtis Donovan** and **Mark Howard**. Finishing

second in the flight with a score of **63** was the **Cutrale Citrus Juices USA** team of **Kevin Updike**, **Jim Snively**, **Mike Whitney** and **John McLean**.

See GOLF on page 22

GOLF, Con't from page 21

In Flight # 3, the winning foursome with a -9 score of **63** was the **Magna Bon II** team of Chad Gillyard, **Eric Johnson, Gerald O'Conner,** and **Shannon Newman.** Finishing second in the flight with a -8 score of **64** was the **BASF** team of **Adrian Jahna, Miles Armstrong, Joe Mitchell** and **Danny Sutton.**

A raffle drawing for 29 great participation prizes was held courtesy of the Association and our friends at: Lykes Bros, The Gator Ag Group, The Blueberry Patch, FMC and Smokin' Citrus

The tournament's title sponsor **Heartland National Bank** also provided each participant a "goody bag" and their continued strong support of our Association's Annual Golf Day is certainly appreciated!



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For more information, contact J.R. Gough at Jr.Gough@brandt.co or 863 781 0363

