



# Citrus connection

## HIGHLANDS COUNTY CITRUS GROWERS President's Column by Bert Harris

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*To steal from Aaron Himrod, My Name is Bert Harris, and I am a Citri-hollic. My addiction has been difficult to break. But I digress.....*

To my point. Our local citrus organization is also (by default) a landowners' association. **Always** has been. In fact, when organized, our stated purpose was to protect the interests of all citrus properties/growers in Highlands County with respect to the local governmental legislative and administrative processes.

Many of our groves are, well, not so much. But our land lives on - as does our need to remain involved with our government entities in order to protect our property interests. Our Association has a strong history of defending our agricultural property rights, protecting our land values, assuring equitable tax rates, and assisting in the planning of our county's future.

The need for that strength of representation has only increased, not diminished over time. **Today** Highlands County is revising its 2030 Comprehensive Plan. That process could have a profound affect on your land uses and values.

Your investment of time and treasure in our Association **today** is more important to your real estate investments than to your Oranges (both boxes).

Said another way, my citrus falls in the "not so much category" (I still experience gut pain when trying to utter the words: "***I am no longer in citrus***"). But my intent is to remain a member of the association. It is my opinion that we are **stronger together** when dealing with our governments (if we don't hang together, we will most certainly hang separately).

An urbanizing Highlands County will face new and different challenges which will impact agricultural properties. Landowners will be tested. I can tell you from personal and professional experience that governmental processes are always tedious, prolonged, and painful.

In my opinion, the strength of our organization has been its steadfast attention to local government. This local governmental focus has been the reason our association is so strongly supported by our members.

Ray and the Board will remain engaged with our local governments. If you have or see specific issues with a property you own - please let us know. We need to make sure issues are addressed for both the members individually and in the greater scheme. If you have had positive land use or classification experiences from other locales that you feel Highlands County may need to explore - please share that with us as well.

Preserving our property rights and values is, and will remain the heart of our mission. Do not hesitate to contact Ray at the HCCGA office with any questions or concerns.

*Bert Harris ///*

### MAY 2024

- Citrus EXPO
- Citrus Fun Shoot
- Hurricane Plans
- Trunk-Injection Therapy
- HCCGA Newsletter Advertising
- Trunk-Injected Tree Sectoring
- HC Extension Agents
- All in for Citrus Podcast
- HCCGA Member Directory
- Leadership Highlands
- Citrus Soil & Leaf Sampling
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## 2024 Calendar of Events

**August 21-22**

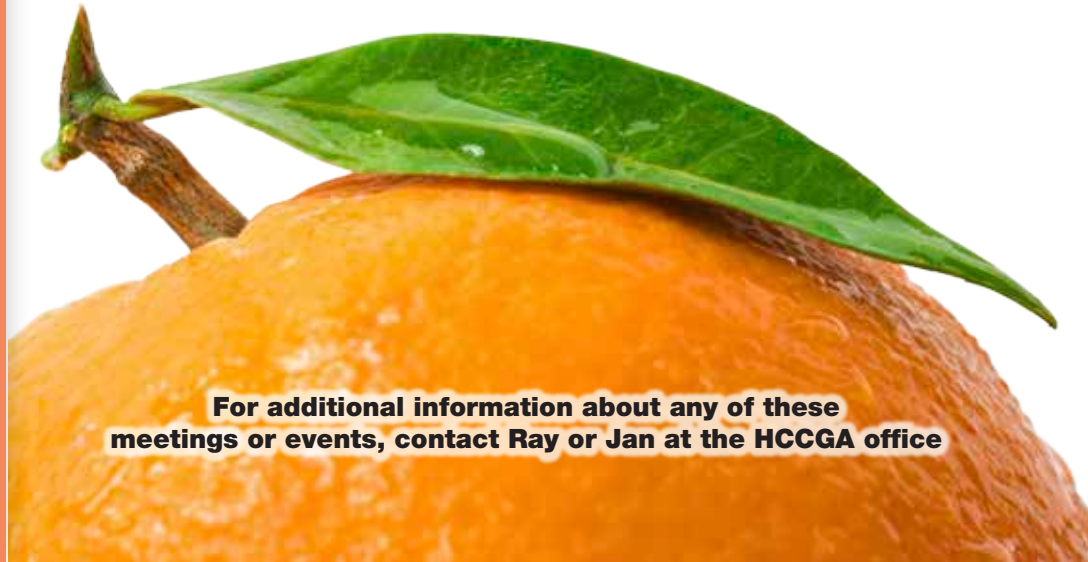
Citrus Expo @ Florida State Fairgrounds in Tampa

**November 12-14**

Ag-Venture @ Highlands County Fairgrounds

**December 7**

HCCGA Citrus Fun Shoot @ Quail Creek Sporting Ranch



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



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# Executive Director's Report

BY RAY ROYCE

The combination of HLB impacts on our groves and the impending work on our County's comprehensive plan and land development regulations makes your organization's mission and work perhaps even more important now than the confluence of agricultural property ownership issues that resulted in the Association's founding in 1990 did.



Political and administrative leadership in Highlands County will be undertaking a wide range of actions in the coming months and years that may significantly impact those of you that own property or operate a business within Highlands County. Some of the results of those actions may well prove to be positive, and some may be troublesome.

While it is unlikely that local government will take action designed to negatively impact the agricultural community intentionally, there is always the chance whenever a governmental entity takes on policy creation or modification that there may be unintended consequences resulting in "issues" that could have bearing on our properties operational parameters and their longer term value preservation. That is why our participation and collective voices in these processes is critical.

County staff and political leadership recognizes that, as the primary set of property owners in our county, the agricultural community needs to be intimately involved as long term decisions about property use are being determined. We need to protect our wide range of agricultural uses, but not be legislatively restricted as solely Ag land or green space for the benefit of others unless properly compensated.

I have also already had meetings with representatives of the local environmental community since they have indicated that they intend on being very active during the review and revision process. We are trying to see where common ground can be mutually beneficial, and if there are any avenues to enhance the suite of environmental services that Ag property owners could benefit from.

There will soon be some changes made to the county's fire assessment model as well. If you have commercial buildings you may want to pay attention as the per square foot assessment rate could be increased as much as 250%. Also, if your Ag properties are comprised of multiple legal parcels in a singular location - you may want to consider whether it would be feasible to combine parcels since the vacant land assessment rate will nearly double it appears. Give me a call if you have any questions.

Production work on the 2024 HCCGA Annual Member Directory is now underway. Members need to make sure that they have provided us with up-to-date contact information so it can be included in this year-round resource tool. If any Associate members want to enhance their presence in this year's directory through advertising and have not already done so, just contact Ray or Jan at the HCCGA office.

Save the dates for a few things coming up: the **2024 Citrus Expo**, and its very informative educational sessions, is coming up on **August 21<sup>st</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup>** at the Florida State Fairgrounds in Tampa. And for some great outdoor fun and fellowship – not to mention some tremendous food & raffle prizes - the 2024 HCCGA Citrus Fun Shoot will be held on Saturday, **December 7<sup>th</sup>** as the shoot returns to **Quail Creek Sporting Ranch**.

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 any 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 30<sup>th</sup>. 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 [news@citrus.myflorida.com](mailto:news@citrus.myflorida.com) and ask to be added to FDOC's email distribution list.



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# Excellent Program Coming Together for Citrus & Specialty Crop Expo

The Citrus and Specialty Crop Expo 2024 is scheduled for **August 21<sup>st</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup>**, 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=feacf6bdeffd-4354-bf84-ea4675064fe4&em=cNjveWNIQGhjY2dhLmNvbQ--&utm\\_campaign=CE+Attendee+Registration+Open](https://citrusexpo.net/2024-citrus-specialty-crop-expo-attendee-registration/?fref=feacf6bdeffd-4354-bf84-ea4675064fe4&em=cNjveWNIQGhjY2dhLmNvbQ--&utm_campaign=CE+Attendee+Registration+Open).



PRESENTED BY: **AgNet** MEDIA 

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.

The educational sessions are taking shape for the Expo. In a time when agricultural policy is a very important issue, the Expo's general session will focus on topics including the farm bill and statewide legislative issues.

A panel discussion including Commissioner of Agriculture Wilton Simpson, state Sen. Jay Collins and state Rep. Danny Alvarez will feature Ag policy and how growers can get involved to make sure their voices are heard in Tallahassee. Tori Rumenik, director of commodity services and supply chain with the Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association, will provide an update on the farm bill and specialty crop priorities in the legislation.

Citrus seminars will cover the hot topics of the day, including oxytetracycline trunk injection, pest management, updated citrus nutrition recommendations, citrus breeding and economics. A panel discussion will feature University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences researchers. Back by popular demand, a grower panel will address what's happening in the grove and production tactics being deployed to improve tree health, yield and quality.

**See EXPO on page 6**



*EXPO, Con't from page 5*

### **Catch Up with Chef Justin at the Citrus & Specialty Crop Expo**

Chef Justin Timineri is a certified executive chef, author, award winner, teacher and television personality. He currently serves as the state chef and culinary ambassador and promotes the value of healthy food choices and proper nutrition. In 2006, Chef Justin won the Food Network Challenge Great American Seafood Cook-off in New Orleans for the country's best domestic seafood dish. He has also worked internationally for premier hospitality and catering companies, including the 2012 Olympic Games in London.

Chef Justin will be appearing at the Citrus & Specialty Crop Expo and providing a cooking demonstration on the trade show floor. He also will be speaking about the Fresh from Florida program during the event's general session. The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services program promotes locally grown fruits and vegetables.

Don't miss the opportunity to visit with fellow growers, industry representatives and top-notch researchers at the Citrus & Specialty Crop Expo in Tampa, FL. Registration is free for commercial growers, commercial grove owners, commercial grove managers, certified crop advisers, grower association executives, government, legislative and universities. Register now at: <https://citrusexpo.net/2024-citrus-specialty-crop-expo-attendee-registration/>

Exhibit spaces are still available for companies interested in exhibiting. Get your company's name in front of the Southeast's best growers and register for a booth today. For more details, visit [www.CitrusExpo.net](http://www.CitrusExpo.net).

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# 2024 Citrus Fun Shoot at Quail Creek - December 7th

Preliminary planning is about to get underway for the **2024 HCCGA Citrus Sporting Clays Fun Shoot**. While our Fun Shoot has continued to evolve over the past 27 plus years, some things remain the same for us – providing a great opportunity for fellowship with others within our industry and greater agricultural community, fun shooting, great food and some fabulous green bird station and raffle prizes.



So save the date, **Saturday December 7<sup>th</sup>**, on your calendar for our 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Citrus Fun Shoot and Prime Rib & Seafood luncheon extravaganza.

The Citrus Fun Shoot will return to **Quail Creek Sporting Ranch**, a full service world class shooting destination located just north of Okeechobee, for 2024. We have held the shoot at Quail Creek (<https://quailcreeksportingranch.com>) every year since 2002 except for last year, and look forward to returning there for this year's shoot.

Many thanks go out to our good friends at OK Corral Gun Club for hosting us at their great facility last year, but the large size of the group participating in our event requires the space and food preparation capacity that Quail Creek can better provide.

We will soon start the process of getting our event's Title Sponsors into place in order to finalize our shoot flier and get it out to our members and the public by late summer for shoot registration commencement. While we expect that most, if not all, of last year's major sponsors will re-up for this year – just about every year once the flier comes out, some associate member inevitably says *"boy I wish I could have been a major sponsor of the shoot"*.

***So if you are potentially interested in being one of our Title Sponsors (a \$1,500.00 investment includes placement for 8 shooters, use of one shooting cart and a lot of great PR), get with Ray or Jan at the HCCGA office ASAP for more details.***

Look forward to seeing many of you at **Quail Creek Sporting Ranch** on **Saturday, December 7<sup>th</sup>**!





# Have a Hurricane Plan in Place

*By Frank Giles*

Florida citrus growers are all too familiar with the fallout from hurricanes in recent history. In 2017, Hurricane Irma came up the spine of the state causing an estimated \$760 million in damage to the citrus industry. Then in 2022, Hurricane Ian took an even more direct path over key citrus-production areas causing another \$247 million in losses, according to a study by UF/IFAS.

Weakened by HLB, groves are taking longer to recover from hurricanes. There is some discussion that without the hurricanes, the new trunk-injection therapies to treat HLB might have shown more dramatic positive results.

## **Super-Charged Season in Store?**

With a La Niña weather pattern predicted to take hold this summer, chances are a little greater for hurricane activity to affect Florida. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association, La Niña is characterized by less wind shear. The shear helps disrupt approaching storms. The weather pattern also is more conducive to the formation of convection and thunderstorms, which are the building blocks of hurricanes. And the waters in the Atlantic and Caribbean are already very warm, which could add fuel to the storms that do form.

In late March, AccuWeather released its annual hurricane prediction and noted it could be a “super-charged” season with record-breaking potential. AccuWeather meteorologists are forecasting 20 to 25 named storms across the Atlantic basin in 2024, including 8 to 12 hurricanes, four to seven major hurricanes and four to six direct U.S. impacts. This is all above the 30-year historical average of 14 named storms, seven hurricanes, three major hurricanes and four direct U.S. impacts.

## **Be Prepared**

While citrus growers certainly can't control the weather, they can take actions to prepare. UF/IFAS has worked with growers through many hurricanes and has developed some recommendations on best practices when preparing for hurricane season (June–November). Here are some of the key tips:

**Personnel assignments:** A major part of the hurricane plan is ensuring that all managers know their responsibilities prior to, during and after a hurricane. Make a list of all tasks that will need to be performed so there are no last-minute, unanticipated gaps to plug. Identify and maintain an updated list of the members of a damage-inspection team, which will determine where storm damage occurred and how extensive it is. Make sure each team member knows his or her responsibilities. Specific workers should be assigned to fix ditches, prop up trees, fix roadways and perform other tasks after the storm. Make sure you know how to contact workers at their place of safety, and that they have a way to call in after the storm.

Chris Oswalt, UF/IFAS citrus Extension agent covering Polk and Hillsborough counties, says personnel assignments are particularly important in preparing for a storm.

“I would suggest as a group practicing a hurricane drill to run through the mechanics of the assignments, including safety training,” he says. “Hurricanes are stressful situations, and you don't want to find deficiencies in your plan while the storm is happening. Plan ahead and don't wait until the day before. You never realize how much stuff you must attend to until you have a hurricane on your doorstep.”

**See *STORM* on page 9**



## ***STORM, Con't from page 8***

**Safety training:** Workers should be trained in the safe operation of unfamiliar equipment that they may have to use if a hurricane hits. For instance, drivers may wind up using chain saws to remove a downed tree that is blocking a road.

**Liquid tanks:** Tanks containing fuel, fertilizer and other materials should be kept full, so they do not move in the wind and rain and to ensure that sufficient fuel is available for machinery used in recovery efforts after the storm.

**Ditches:** Ditches should be kept clean and pumped down to help maximize water-removal efforts after the storm.

**Cultural practices:** Trees should be pruned regularly to reduce broken limbs and minimize toppled or uprooted trees. Windbreaks can also reduce tree damage and the spread of citrus canker.

**Emergency equipment:** Make sure that all emergency equipment — including generators, chain saws, torches and air compressors — is on hand and in good repair. Emergency generators should be available for use in headquarters and equipment maintenance shops. Large diesel-powered generators with 25-to-60-kilowatt capacity can be rented or leased by the month during the hurricane season.

**Communications equipment:** Ensure that radios are in good working order. Have handheld portable radios with extra charged battery packs available for workers who will need them in the field after the storm. Direct truck-to-truck radio communication is most reliable when phone lines are down. However, cellular phones with radio capabilities and standard cellular phones can help workers save valuable time during the recovery process, as opposed to communication systems that require messages to be relayed through a base unit.

**Hazardous materials:** Hazardous materials should be secured prior to a storm, and gasoline pumps should be shut down.

**Emergency contacts:** Have a list of phone numbers you might need in an emergency, including those for the phone and electric companies, sheriff and medical facilities.

### ***Post –Storm Checklist***

After the storm, job No. 1 is making sure everyone is accounted for and safe, Oswalt says. Then damage assessments and cleanup can begin.

“Going back to the personnel assignments before the storm, here is where you should have addressed your order of priorities and damage surveys,” Oswalt says. “First and foremost, my list would start with people’s safety, then consider those that would be most immediate hazards, mitigation of secondary hazards and then on to cleanup and recovery.”

Here are a few more recommendations from UF/IFAS:

**Activity checklist:** An activity checklist will help ensure that all essential damage assessment and recovery operations are carried out. Additionally, a plan that prioritizes the importance of individual blocks makes grove recovery efficient. With a priority plan, managers can quickly determine where to begin recovery operations.

**Employee call-in:** Maintain a current list of employee locations and phone numbers. As soon as it is safe to do so, call in those who will be needed for damage inspection and grove recovery work.

**Damage inspection:** If roads are passable, inspection of tree and equipment damage may be conducted from trucks. Since flooding, downed trees and electrical poles may have blocked roads,

***See STORM on page 10***

### ***STORM, Con't from page 9***

large growers should consider making prior arrangements for a helicopter or flying service to transport the grove manager to survey grove damage. Aerial surveillance can also determine routes of passage through the grove.

**Clear road access:** Have crews clear all roads leading to parts of the grove where trees must be reset, or other recovery activities must be conducted. Having a clear path for workers will speed up the recovery effort.

**Water removal:** Remove excess water from tree root zones as soon as possible. It is essential to accomplish this task within 72 hours to avoid feeder root damage due to insufficient oxygen.

**Tree rehabilitation:** Resetting of trees to an upright position should be accomplished as soon as possible after the storm. Ensure that employees know how to properly upright toppled trees and that appropriate equipment is available. Such equipment might include pruning saws, chain saws, front-end loaders, backhoes and shovels. Toppled trees should be pruned back to sound wood. Painting exposed trunks and branches with white latex paint helps prevent sunburn.

***Courtesy of Citrus Industry magazine***



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# Where Do Growers Stand With Trunk-Injection Therapy?

By Daniel Cooper & Dr. Ute Albrecht



Florida growers are well into their second application of oxytetracycline (OTC) trunk injection as the 2023–24 season winds down. The results of the first application made last year are becoming somewhat clearer, but there's still more to observe and learn about trunk injection. Ute Albrecht, associate professor of plant physiology with UF/IFAS, has been leading research efforts on the use of trunk-injection therapy. She discusses what she has been seeing in her research and in growers' groves.

## **Q: What have you heard from growers about results from the first application of OTC?**

**ALBRECHT:** Early results seem to be mixed, although many growers are reporting positive responses. There is a consensus that younger trees are responding better to the treatments than older trees and that Hamlins are not as responsive as Valencias. Older trees will likely need multiple years of injection. Injections might be more effective if split into two (on opposite sides of the trunk) to improve distribution of the OTC. Regarding the Hamlins, I don't know in which month growers performed their injections. We injected Hamlin trees in June last year, and although differences were not dramatic, we measured a positive yield and juice quality response.

Some more fine-tuning will be necessary to determine the best month of injection for the early varieties. At the time of this article (mid-March), most of the Valencias have not been harvested yet, so the full extent of the injection effects remains to be determined. We just completed harvesting two Valencia trials with several thousand trees in each trial. The trees were injected in April and May (2023), respectively. We measured a 35% increase in pounds solids per acre in one trial and a 70% increase in the other trial. We also noted different responses for different rootstocks. The trial in which we measured the 35% increase was overall more productive than the other trial. In addition to yield and soluble solids, the Brix/acid ratio and the juice color were improved in both trials. These results are certainly encouraging and confirm what we have been measuring in our earlier studies.

## **Q: How many OTC trials have you conducted and what have they been comparing?**

**ALBRECHT:** We are always doing something new, so it's difficult to say exactly how many trials we have conducted or are in progress. At our UF/IFAS Southwest Florida Research and Education Center farm, we have conducted several small trials, mostly with young (5- to 6-year-old) Valencia trees. We have been injecting 0.75 grams of OTC per tree and, without exception, trees responded with reduced bacterial titer levels, visibly better health, less fruit drop, more harvestable fruit and better juice quality.

**See INJECTION on page 12**

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## ***INJECTION, Con't from page 11***

The same OTC rate also resulted in tremendous improvement in a mature Duncan grapefruit trial at our center. We have also begun injecting severely HLB-affected 2- to 3-year-old trees to see if they can be rehabilitated.

In commercial production sites, we have 12 injection trials in progress. Some of these trials are fairly large and encompass several thousand trees. We are comparing things such as different OTC rates, different months of injection, different OTC formulations and different injection types. This includes a comparison of the efficacy of delivering the same OTC dose in two or more injections on different sides of the trunk with that of delivering it in one single injection on one side of the trunk. We are also comparing rootstock versus scion injections and whether different rootstocks respond differently. An ongoing smaller trial at our center is investigating the integration of individual protective covers and OTC injections. So far, the results are encouraging.

### **Q: What are you evaluating in your latest Hamlin research?**

**ALBRECHT:** The Hamlin trial we have in progress is near Fort Meade. The trees were planted in 2005, so they are older than what we have been testing so far. In this trial, we are testing four different OTC concentrations (from 0.55 grams/tree to 1.65 grams/tree) to determine the most effective dose in terms of cost and tree response.

We are also comparing alternate-year injections (injections in years one and three, but not in year two) with the current label recommendations (injections in years one and two, but not in year three). The same treatments are being tested in a Valencia trial nearby, also planted in 2005. That trial also includes a comparison of June and September injections.

### **Q: What are the results of the Hamlin trial?**

**ALBRECHT:** We injected the trees in June and harvested in December with the required 180-day preharvest interval. This is the first time we injected trees of that age (19 years). Injections were performed into the scion because the rootstock trunk was too large and too furrowed for us to feel comfortable injecting into. Considering the age of the trees, the results were not too disappointing. Across all injection treatments, we measured a 26% increase in fruit yield, a 10% increase in fruit size and a 7% increase in Brix/pound solids. Among the tested rates, the best results were found with the highest OTC rate (1.65 grams/tree). That rate was applied in split injections, meaning that we injected half of the dose on one side of the trunk and the other half on the opposite side. We are hoping to see more improvements in the upcoming year.

### **Q: What have you been hearing from growers about how the second OTC application is going?**

**ALBRECHT:** Year two injections seem to be in progress for the early varieties. I'm a bit uneasy about these early injections as we have never injected earlier than April in our studies. I understand that there are logistical and economic reasons for doing the injections earlier, but we don't have any data on how this affects uptake, distribution and efficacy. During the winter, trees are not as metabolically active, which may hinder uptake and effective distribution. It may also slow wound closure. Lastly, reinoculation with the HLB bacteria is likely going to occur during the spring flush, possibly making earlier injections less effective than later injections. Until we know more, I would therefore rather inject after the bloom and when the new spring flush has fully expanded.

### **Q: Based on your research, how do you think commercial groves will respond to the second OTC application?**

**ALBRECHT:** We have a few commercial field trials awaiting harvest after two consecutive years of injections. Although we don't have the harvest data yet, the trees look clearly healthier, with denser canopies, darker green leaves and more fruit. The fruit are also larger and have a much better color. The effects, though they were already visible after one injection, are more obvious now. So, I'm hopeful that the benefits of two consecutive years of injections will be compounded.

***See INJECTION on page 13***

### *INJECTION, Con't from page 12*

**Q: Is there anything else that you would like to add?**

**ALBRECHT:** I know that costs and other logistics determine when and how injections are being performed. However, to be effective, we need to be doing it right. We have measured significant yield increases and consistent improvements in juice quality in all our trials. I advise everyone to leave some trees non-injected for comparison. A one-time injection is unlikely to restore tree health and productivity to pre-HLB levels, and positive effects may not always be evident without the comparison against a non-injected control.

I also advise growers to pay attention to the month of injection. We know that injections performed between April and June consistently improve Brix/pound solids, but we are finding that August injections improve the Brix even more, at least in our studies with 5- to 6-year-old Valencias and OLL-8. It is also worth noting that the OTC in these trials was applied with two, smaller-diameter injectors (Chemjets), and that we did not observe any leaf phytotoxicity. In fact, we have never observed any leaf phytotoxicity with split injections. More data will be available once we complete all our harvests.

*Courtesy of Citrus Industry magazine*



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# New Highlands County Extension Agents

There will be two new UF/IFAS Extension agents starting in Highlands County this summer. Both of these young ladies were very impressive during the interview process and look to bring an educational expertise and sense of enthusiasm to their respective positions.

**Ms. Alissa Hevesh** will serve as the new Highlands County Agriculture Production / Natural Resources Agent which includes citrus agent duties. Alissa will start on Monday, June 17, 2024.

Alissa received a Dual B.A. in Economics & Environmental Studies and a minor in Leadership Studies from Eckerd College in 2018. She received her M.S. in Food and Resource Economics from the University of Florida.

She has a rich employment history from work as a customer service associate and team leader for Worden Farms, a Research assistant on international political economy for Eckerd College, a greenhouse manager for Gamble Creek Farms, Nursery manager for Little Tree Nursery, a regenerative landscaper/educator for Living Roots EcoDesign, many of these she juggled at the same time.

Alissa was an Econ student trainee for USDA Economic Research Service, as a graduate assistant for UF, she contributed to research in emerging agricultural industries and most recently a program planner for the housing and community development department in Pinellas County, hired to help launch a Food Access Action plan.

*Alissa shares while earning my undergraduate degrees, I helped manage a large vegetable stand at the local farmers' market every Saturday morning, playing an active role in my community's food system. Even as a groggy college kid, I woke up before the crack of dawn to sell vegetables. It was worth it. I learned the value of customer service and the challenges of meeting consumer demands. What could be more fulfilling than helping to nourish your neighbors.*

**Ms. Alexandra "Ally" Bennett** will serve as the new Highlands County Livestock Agent. Ally will start on Monday, August 12, 2024.

Ally will complete her M.S. in Beef Cattle Reproduction and Physiology this summer from the

**See AGENTS on page 15**



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### ***AGENTS, Con't from page 14***

University of Florida. Her thesis is *Assessing abundance of pregnancy markers in fertility classified beef cows*. Ally has a B.S. in Animal Biology with a minor in Agribusiness from UF. She has participated in the 71<sup>st</sup> Beef Cattle short course and the Deseret Reproduction School.

Ally has been involved in Extension activities, educating ranchers through the *Know Your Heifer* and the *Know Your Heifer Continuing Education* programs. In the *Florida Braham field day and heifer sale*, she educated beef producers on the seasonal effects of estrus expression and reproductive outcomes. At the *Beef Cattle Reproduction School with AI at Deseret*, she taught palpation techniques, pregnancy detection to beef producers, and ways to improve reproductive management and efficiency of their herd. Other activities included teaching palpation, artificial insemination, female anatomy, and reproductive health. Ally is a graduate research assistant for UF and has experience as a ranch hand intern, treatment technician, and lead veterinary technician.

Ally shared that *given the prominence of cattle, equine, small ruminants, poultry, and forage management in Highlands County, I am eager to collaborate with fellow extension agents and researchers to develop programs that cater to the education needs of local producers.*

Both Alissa and Ally are excited by the prospect of joining efforts to support producers and promote agricultural education in Highlands County. Please welcome them both to their new positions. We will share their contact information once they are in the office and up and running.

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The University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences and Southeast AgNet have partnered to provide the latest news on citrus-related research in monthly podcasts at: <http://citrusindustry.net/allinforcitrus/>

The podcast, "All in for Citrus," features short interviews with scientists working to find solutions to citrus greening and other devastating citrus diseases. The podcast complements the UF/IFAS Citrus Research website at: [citrusresearch.ifas.ufl.edu](http://citrusresearch.ifas.ufl.edu), and their monthly newsletter.



# 2024 HCCGA Member Directory

We have commenced work on producing our 2024 Annual Grower & Associate Member Directory. This year we plan to have the Directory distributed to Association members in late July.

This 8.5 X 11 full color booklet has become a valuable resource guide for our members, grower and associate alike. The 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 was mailed out to all current members in late May. If you did 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 was included in the mailing that all members should have received.

There are several different advertising options available: quarter (\$200.00), half (\$300.00) and full page (\$450.00) black and white ads and half page (\$400.00) and full page (\$600.00) full color ads.

Contact Jan or Ray at the HCCGA office at (863) 385-8091 or [admin@hccga.com](mailto:admin@hccga.com) if you would like additional information about advertising pricing or acquiring an enhanced presence in this year's Annual Member Directory.



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# Leadership Highlands 2025

South Florida State College is now accepting applications for the Leadership Highlands Class of 2025. The Leadership Highlands program has been developing local leaders since the pilot class graduated in 2000. The mission of the Leadership Highlands program is *“to develop Leaders with a thorough understanding of, and strong sense of commitment to, Highlands County and an appreciation for the strength found in our County’s abundant diversity”*.

Founded and nurtured by the three Highlands County Chambers of Commerce and select alumni, who comprise the Leadership Highlands Advisory Board, the goals of the program are to familiarize the participants with the infrastructure, agencies and economic enterprises that exist in Highlands County; to expose the participants to the range of needs in the community and to identify the resources available to meet those needs; to provide participants the opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with each other and existing community leaders, so as to learn from the backgrounds and perspectives of one another; and to encourage civic participation and volunteer involvement in the community.

The Program kicks off with an August 29, 2024 orientation session and features 10 full day sessions held once a month (*one session is actually a two day trip to Tallahassee in April*) that explore different aspects of Highlands County’s complex matrix of industries governance and various community organizations. Graduation from the program will be after session ten on June 5, 2025.

Class size is limited to no more than 28 members, and is by invitation of the selection committee. For information about enrollment or participation, please contact Kris Juve, Coordinator, Leadership Highlands at SFSC at 863-784-7189 or [juvek@southflorida.edu](mailto:juvek@southflorida.edu) for additional information.

Applications are due by **August 15, 2024**. The program’s application can be downloaded at: <https://www.southflorida.edu/current-students/degrees-programs/special-programs/leadership-highlands>.

Members of the agricultural community (*especially early and mid-career young adults*) are encouraged to consider participation in this program.



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# 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](http://www.hccga.com).

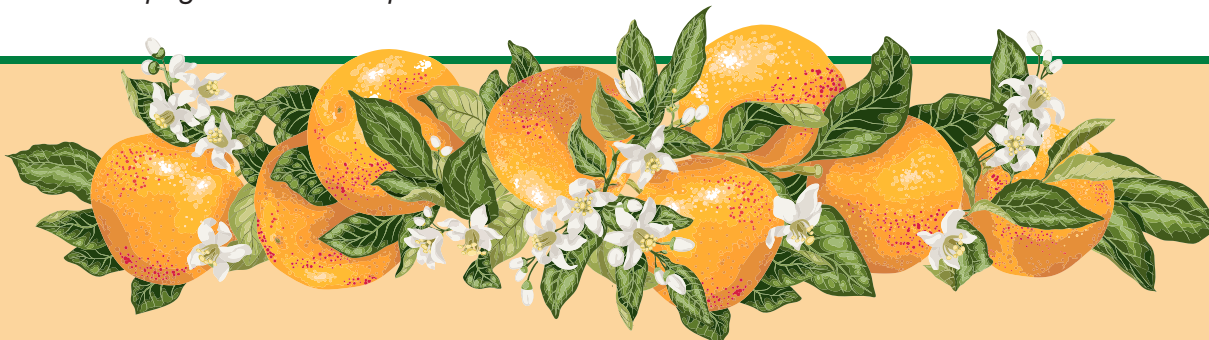
So if you would like more information about how to advertise with the Association, or would like to place an insertion order, contact Ray or Jan at the HCCGA office. Below are our advertising rates:

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# How to Address Sectoring in Trunk-Injected Trees

By Ute Albrecht and Larissa Nunes

Citrus growers who injected oxytetracycline (OTC) last year most likely experienced sectoring, which is the appearance of some portions of the canopy looking considerably healthier than the rest of the tree.

## Recent Research

In a recent trial in a commercial citrus grove, UF/IFAS researchers injected nearly 200 Valencia/X-639 trees with 1.1 grams of OTC per tree (11,000 parts per million rate) using the FLeXInject injectors. Injections were done into the rootstock trunk at the beginning of September 2023.

Two weeks after the injections, there was considerable yellowing and “bronzing” of the leaves on the side of the tree that had been injected. By the time of harvest (early April 2024), an obvious sectoring in terms of tree health was evident in all injected trees. The injected side looked considerably healthier with larger, greener leaves and more, better colored fruit than the non-injected side. Also, less fruit drop was noticed on the injected side.

Overall, a 2.25-fold (125%) yield increase was measured in response to the injections. For the juice-quality analysis, fruits were collected separately from the injected side and the opposite side of each tree. The average Brix was 11.2 on the injected side and 9.3 on the opposite side! In comparison, the Brix for the non-injected trees was only 8.5. The same was found for the Brix/acid ratio and the fruit rind color. Both were significantly better on the injected side than the opposite side. But even on the opposite side, findings were better compared to non-injected trees.

## Recommendations

These results clearly document the sectoring that typically occurs when OTC injections are performed using current practices. The sectoring, and likely any leaf phytotoxic effects, may be moderated by splitting the injections into two on opposite sides of the trunk. However, this may be logistically challenging and/or cost prohibitive. It is therefore strongly recommended to perform the second-year injections on the side of the trunk opposite to first-year injections.

Sectoring may be especially evident in trees with a short trunk. The short trunk will prevent the OTC from dispersing evenly before reaching the canopy, thus causing sectoring. Injecting in line with the crotch of the scaffold branches may also reduce some of the sectoring.

**Ute Albrecht ([ualbrecht@ufl.edu](mailto:ualbrecht@ufl.edu)) is an associate professor, and Larissa Nunes is a PhD student, both at the UF/IFAS SWFREC in Immokalee**



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# Citrus Soil and Leaf Sampling

We will soon be approaching the optimum time of the year (*July-September*) to collect citrus soil and leaf samples for analysis. Soil and leaf sampling is a key component to the evaluation of a citrus nutrition program **AND** the Citrus BMP record keeping and documentation that is required today. Annual sampling, and its subsequent analysis, will provide you a good idea of the nutritional trends that have been occurring within specific grove blocs from year to year. ***Remember to retain records for all soil and leaf analysis results.***

Select representative trees from each grove bloc that you intend to manage nutritionally the same. Typically 15 to 20 trees are selected within a grove bloc for sampling and collect your leaf and soil samples from these trees. You can reduce the year to year variability in interpreting your analysis results by some degree by utilizing samples from the same trees from one year to the next. With the availability of affordable GPS technology nowadays, from a portable unit in your truck to most smart phones, the opportunity to utilize it in order to sample the same areas (trees) year after year should be taken advantage of.

Soil analysis can provide very specific information that you can use in your nutritional program decision-making. This information includes soil pH, phosphorous, calcium, magnesium and copper (*if you specifically request the copper analysis*).

From these 15 to 20 trees, take a single soil core of an 8 inch depth from within the irrigation pattern of each tree. Place the sampling cores in a clean nonmetal bucket for collection. When you have collected all the necessary cores from a production bloc -thoroughly mix the sample cores together. Take approximately one pint of the soil from the mixed sample for analysis.

Also, don't forget that not all soil testing laboratories use the same extraction procedures to determine soil nutrient levels. You may even want to consider sending samples from the same "bucket" to differing labs to compare results. Make sure if you change soil testing labs from one year to the next, or utilize different extraction methodologies, that you understand how to properly interpret the results and appropriate tables.

Leaf analysis can be utilized for all essential elements including those determined in the soil analysis. As mentioned above, leaf samples can, and should be, collected from the same trees as the soil samples. One hundred healthy, and representative, leaves from the 15 to 20 trees should be collected. These leaves should be 4 to 6 months old from non-fruiting twigs. This time frame will generally be between the months of July to September. In handling the leaf samples, keep the collected leaves out of the heat. If they cannot be sent out immediately, place in a refrigerator for overnight storage.

For macronutrient analysis, the leaves need not be washed. If micronutrient analysis is desired, then the leaves will need to be washed well to remove surface contamination. Washing of leaves can be done by soaking the leaves in a mild detergent solution and rubbing them between your thumb and forefinger. The washing of leaves should be done as soon as possible after collection. Some micronutrients are exceedingly difficult to remove (copper, manganese and zinc) through surface washing. This should serve as a reminder that it may be exceedingly difficult to make judgments utilizing leaf analysis if you are applying frequent nutritional sprays.



# Farm TEAM Card

Commissioner of Agriculture Wilton Simpson has announced that farmers can now apply for the Florida Farm Tax Exempt Agricultural Materials (TEAM) Card.

The plastic wallet-sized Florida Farm TEAM Card is a physical alternative to the paper exemption certificates and aims to streamline the purchasing process for sales-tax-exempt agricultural materials, making it more convenient to purchase these materials tax-exempt. The card is free, and those interested in applying or learning more (*including what is exempt*) can visit: [www.fdacs.gov/FarmTEAM](http://www.fdacs.gov/FarmTEAM).

## **How Does The Florida Farm TEAM Card Work?**

The TEAM card does not expand or create agricultural exemptions beyond those provided in s. 212.08, F.S. A farmer whose real property is classified as agricultural pursuant to s. 193.461, F.S. – OR – A farmer who has implemented agricultural best management practices on property it owns or leases.

## **How long does the exemption approval last?**

Unless an exemption is revoked by the DOR, each approved Card is good for five years before renewal is required.

## **How will stores/vendors verify Farm TEAM Cards?**

Each card will have a URL or QR Code that will allow stores/vendors to verify Farm TEAM Cards quickly and easily.

## **Can stores/vendors make a copy of my card to keep on file for quick reference?**

Yes, with cardholder permission. The card will not display sensitive data such as social security numbers or tax IDs. Cards will display the individual or corporate name and address. The tax exemption number is provided by DOR.

## **How many cards may I request under a single entity?**

FDACS will provide up to 10 cards. Each card will contain the individual business or corporate name and address. Cards will not name individual cardholders.

## **Will online vendors accept the TEAM Card Exemption?**

User will have to follow the online vendor's procedures and any requirements, which may include submission of the Tax Exemption Certificate issued by DOR.

## **Who do I contact if I have questions?**

[FarmTEAMCard@FDACS.gov](mailto:FarmTEAMCard@FDACS.gov).

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Magna-Bon II, LLC  
Maxijet, Inc.  
MetLife Investment Management  
Mike Hurst Citrus Services, Inc.  
Miller Chemical & Fertilizer  
MoonBeam Land Company  
Morgan Stanley Wealth Management  
Murphy Ag Solutions  
Newton Crouch, Inc.  
NovaSource  
Nufarm Americas, Inc.  
NUTECH  
Nutrien Ag Solutions  
OK Corral Gun Club  
Ole South Auto Salvage, Inc.  
Orchid Island Juice Company  
Pantuso, Inc.  
Patriot Welding Supply  
Peace River Citrus Products, Inc.  
Performance Nutrition/ LidoChem  
Phillip Rucks Citrus Nursery, Inc.  
Elizabeth Pines, PA  
Plant Food Systems  
PGIM Real Estate Finance  
Quail Creek Sporting Ranch  
Rabo Agri Finance  
Rogers Petroleum, Inc.  
Rovenssa Next  
SEVEN Sebring Raceway Hotel  
Shutts & Bowen, LLP  
John F. Smoak and Sons  
Smoak Groves, Inc.  
Somers Irrigation, Inc.  
Southeast Ag Solutions  
Southeast Green Space, LLC  
South Florida State College  
South Ridge Abstract and Title Co.  
South State Bank  
Southern Citrus Nurseries  
Southern Gardens Grove Corp.  
Southridge Citrus Nursery, Inc.  
Stallings Crop Insurance Corporation  
SunRidge Harvesting Company  
SVN Saunders Ralston Dantzler Real Estate  
Syngenta  
Taylor Oil Company, Inc.  
Tessenderlo Kerley, Inc.  
The Avanti Company  
The Story Companies  
TIMAC Agro USA, Inc.  
Trademark Nitrogen  
Tradewinds Power Corp  
TriEst Ag Group  
TriYield  
Tree Defender  
Triangle Chemical Co.  
Triangle Hardware  
Tropicana Products, Inc.  
Valent  
Vortex Granular Solutions, LLC  
W.A. Williams Citrus Nursery & Service Inc.  
Wards Nursery, Inc.  
Waypoints Financial  
Wedgworth, Inc.  
Wells and Associates Insurance  
Wicks, Brown, Williams and Co., CPAs  
Yara North America, Inc.





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## Cutting Edge Nutrition & Crop Protection for Trees Impacted by Citrus HLB

BRANDT, a leading provider of specialty inputs, offers a wide range of proprietary nutrition and crop protection products. The following products are recommended to help treat trees that have been impacted by Citrus HLB.

### **Spring Pre-Bloom through Post-Bloom Sprays:**

#### **Foliar Feed with Boron, Calcium and Magnesium**

- **BRANDT® Manni-Plex® Cal-Mag** - high efficiency foliar calcium/magnesium
- **BRANDT Manni-Plex for Citrus** - high efficiency foliar nutrient combo for citrus
- **BRANDT Smart B-Mo** - high efficiency foliar boron/molybdenum
- **Celite® 610** - mechanical insecticide that contains 100% diatomaceous earth, OMRI Listed

### **Complexed Nutrients:**

#### **Feed with Dry Lignosulfates**

- **Agra Sol** - dry soluble powder chelated micronutrients

### **Summer Oil Sprays:**

#### **Foliar Feed and Protect**

- **BRANDT Smart K B** - high efficiency foliar potassium/boron
- **Nordox® 75 WG or 30/30** - copper fungicide, OMRI Listed
- **TresOil®** - emulsified fungicide/insecticide spray oil, OMRI Listed

*For more information, contact J.R. Gough at  
[Jr.Gough@brandt.co](mailto:Jr.Gough@brandt.co) or 863 781 0363*

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