



Citrus connection

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

Thirty-four years ago our founders created this Association to address several local industry needs: a voice in our community and representation with our governments and government agencies. They established our Mission:

To protect and enhance the viability and profitability of commercial citrus groves in Highlands County

Our voice provided a strong and consistent presence in the community. Mere truth telling enlightened the public that our industry's agricultural practices are environmentally sound and sustainable. Our industry has voluntarily migrated to more responsible use of inputs over time. The public needed to know that we use water effectively via microjets; that fertigation directly on the rootzone is more effective and releases less N and P into the groundwater; and that the pesticides and herbicides we utilize have short half-lives and are more environmentally friendly. Our voice fosters a stronger local citrus public image.

Florida Citrus Mutual and Florida Farm Bureau already do some of this on a statewide basis. However, Highlands County citrus growers and their associate partners needed a daily voice when local decisions were being made that could impact our agricultural operations or our land values. Be those impacts intentional or more likely – unintentionally.

Our Association has remained true to its mission. And our Board, over the past three plus decades has constantly charged our executive director to become intimately involved in everything on a local basis that could impact our businesses, our property rights, or our land values. We continue that today as our industry faces daunting challenges, and the prospect of some citrus properties moving to other uses, either short or long term.

Our Voice (Ray) has been heard in the meetings of every governmental agency or interest group; has helped promulgate county ordinances and other regulations; and has helped to educate Highlands County residents to the benefits of the local citrus industry.

Ray has done a great job over time representing our interests. The investment of our members and associate members through membership dues together with the support of our sponsors has paid off many times over.

Under his leadership, past Boards invested in a rainy-day fund to help carry us through the un-fun times. And yes, lately it's been raining quite a bit, however we are positioned to be able to move forward on your behalf because our Voice is needed now more than ever!

I say this to remind our members that we have a resource to help you with any local concerns. Ray may be able to help you directly, or to at least point you in the right direction. Don't hesitate to contact him if there is anything that you perceive our Association, and the strong relationships we have developed, may be able to assist with; including citrus production or environmental research information.

Bert Harris III

JUNE 2024

- Citrus EXPO Preview
- Introducing Alissa Havesh
- CRAFT Update
- All in for Citrus Podcast
- Annual Citrus Conference
- Soil & Leaf Sampling
- Survivor Grapefruit
- Citrus Achievement Award
- Roots & OTC Treatments
- Labor Relations Forum
- Leadership Highlands
- USDA Crop Report
- Citrus Fun Shoot
- Improving Herbicide Efficiency



6419 US Hwy 27 South
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2024 Calendar of Events

August 21-22

Citrus Expo @ Florida State Fairgrounds in Tampa

August 28-30

Ag Labor Relations Forum @ Wyndham Grand Orlando Resort Bonnet Creek

October 11

Initial 2024-2025 USDA Citrus Crop Forecast
and Florida Citrus Mutual BBQ Luncheon

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

I hope everyone had both a safe and enjoyable Independence Day holiday while enjoying some quality time with friends and family. We are all truly blessed to live in this great nation, enjoying the freedoms that allow us to engage in the business and personal pursuits of our choosing. I hope that all of you enjoy the rest of your summer to the greatest extent possible!

Florida Citrus Mutual staff did a masterful job in the planning and execution of the 2024 Annual Citrus Conference including hosting a very large crowd of growers and other industry folks, excellent educational programming, industry leadership meeting availability and a generally very hospitable environment for the industry to enjoy in these trying times.



Learning more about the fine tuning of OTC trunk injection therapy, the Grove First research initiative, CRAFT's future plans for both their existing tree treatments & traditional new planting programs, and how a wide range of other practices can be incorporated into production programs to deal with HLB were just a few of the highlights of the conference.

During the conference's Thursday luncheon, Brenda Burnette was recognized for her years of work promoting our industry with 2024 Citrus Achievement Award. Congratulations Brenda!

I would also be remiss if I did not recognize Joe B Himrod for his significant, albeit fun, citrus conference achievement. He bested 103 others to win the overall "Slide King" title in the conference's much anticipated "unofficial" double elimination water slide racing competition on Friday afternoon – so congrats Joe B!

I would like to commend Tamara Wood for the tremendous job she has done in getting the CRAFT program up and prospering over the past 5 years. She has played a key role in helping guide roughly 1400 projects involving 300+ grower entities leading to new trees in the ground and cost share assistance for growers through existing grove production therapies programs. She has now chosen to return to her full time position with Citrus Mutual – so thank you for your service Tamara!

We also welcome the new CRAFT Executive Director Steven Hall who comes to the position from FDACS where he served as Assistant Deputy Commissioner as an advisor to the Commissioner on legislative and policy issues. Hall also served as the Department's General Counsel for more than five years, advising on a wide variety of topics such as agriculture, aquaculture, food safety and environmental regulation. We look forward to him advancing the CRAFT program even further.

Save the dates for a few things coming up: the 2024 Citrus Expo, and its very informative educational sessions, is coming up on **August 21st & 22nd** at the Florida State Fairgrounds in Tampa. **Friday, October 11th** will see the Initial USDA Citrus Crop Forecast released, and Florida Citrus Mutual will host a BBQ luncheon that is certain to draw quite a crowd of industry members and political figures. Our annual Citrus Sporting Clays Fun Shoot is returning to Quail Creek Sporting Ranch and will be held on **Saturday, December 7th**, so save the date for that as well. Even if you don't shoot sporting clays – you may want to join us for our famous Seafood and Prime Rib Luncheon and raffle drawings.

While we strive to keep our members as informed as possible, please never hesitate in contacting me day or night (cell phone: 863-381-8551) for additional information if you need it; or if I can be of any assistance on any matter, large or small. Remember that if you are not getting regular e-mail updates from us (usually several a week plus this newsletter every month) then we do not have a good e-mail address for you – so please let us know.

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 news@citrus.myflorida.com and ask to be added to FDOC's email distribution list.



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Citrus Seminars Preview for Citrus & Specialty Crop Expo

CITRUS & SPECIALTY CROP EXPO

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The Citrus & Specialty Crop Expo, scheduled for Aug. 21–22 at the Florida State Fairgrounds in Tampa, is a great time for growers to learn about the latest research and production tactics to take to the grove.

Two seminar sessions dedicated to citrus will be held during the event. On the afternoon of Aug. 21, University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) researchers will cover a wide range of topics.

Ute Albrecht will provide the latest data collected in field trials aimed at

maximizing trunk-injection therapies of oxytetracycline (OTC). Tripti Vashisth will speak about optimizing irrigation and how proper nutrition and the use of plant growth regulators will be important tools next season when growers will pause their OTC applications per the product labels. She also will share results of a trial where gibberellic acid was applied via chemigation.

Citrus Research and Education Center Director Michael Rogers will moderate a UF/IFAS researcher panel discussion that will include Davie Kadyampakeni, Megan Dewdney, Ute Albrecht, Tripti Vashisth and Jim Graham. The panel will focus on the off year of OTC and what growers can do in their groves to optimize tree health.

On the morning of Aug. 22, another information-packed citrus session is planned. Brian Scully, former director of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Agricultural Research Service U.S. Horticultural Research Laboratory in Fort Pierce, will speak about the “Scully List” of potential candidates for trunk-injection alternatives to OTC. Several on his list are showing real promise.

Charlie Messina, director of the UF/IFAS Plant Transformation Center, will be speaking about the push to bring growers HLB-resistant citrus trees that have been modified through techniques like CRISPR.

UF/IFAS citrus economist Ariel Singerman will present the economics of OTC injections and the yields necessary to break even applying the therapy. Other UF/IFAS talks include Manjul Dutt, who will share his work with Parson Brown. Larry Duncan will provide a presentation on diaprepes. John Chater will address UF/IFAS citrus breeding efforts to deliver growers guidance on newer varieties and rootstocks and those in the development pipeline. Lauren Diepenbrock will offer new information on snails, which is a growing problem in citrus.

The morning session will be capped off with a grower panel that will give insight on managing OTC applications and other production tactics to maximize tree health and yield.

Introducing Alissa Hevesh

Hello Highlands County Citrus Growers Association! I am thrilled to join the Highlands County Extension team as the new Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension Agent (which includes citrus coverage).

I have a varied history working in agriculture and food systems, which began when I was in college and worked at the local farmers' market on Saturday mornings and has most recently led me to start a direct-to-consumer beef business with my partner. In between, I've worked on diverse-crop farms and in nurseries, interned with the USDA's Economic Research Service, and received my Masters degree in Food and Resource Economics from UF (Go Gators!) I am so grateful to have landed in Highlands County and look forward to meeting you all.



You can reach me by phone at (863) 402-6540, by email at ahevesh@ufl.edu, or by stopping by the Extension office (4509 George Blvd in Sebring) Monday through Friday from 8-5. I'd be glad to chat! Also, if you'd like to be on my email list, please email me and I'll add you.

I am still getting my head around what my program will look like, but initial programming will likely include pesticide licensing assistance classes, agriculture safety monitoring, pile burner trainings, and integrated pest management. If you have any ideas or suggestions for programming or training you'd like to see from me, please reach out and let me know!

It is great to be here with you and I look forward to working together!

Alissa Hevesh

PS: I am currently offering soil testing assistance if anyone would like some support. Soil testing is a great way to determine fertilizer application types and frequencies and potentially help keep production costs down.



CRAFT Program Update

There will soon be a leadership change at the Citrus Research and Field Trials (CRAFT) Foundation. The CRAFT Board of Directors recently announced that Steven Hall will succeed Tamara Wood as the organization's new Executive Director as Wood returns to Florida Citrus Mutual in the role of Director of Operations and Strategic Initiatives.



Hall is very familiar with the CRAFT Program, having played a key role in its initial formation and offering frequent guidance through his former role as Assistant Deputy Commissioner of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. He will officially join CRAFT beginning July 8, 2024. Until that time, Wood will remain in the position of Executive Director/Program Manager, and will continue to assist with the Program as needed to ensure a smooth transition.

Participants and interested growers are welcome to continue reaching out to Wood with questions or concerns about CRAFT as the transition takes place. Additionally, Assistant Program Manager Tina Buice and Scientific Coordinator Carisa Keller remain committed to assisting growers with their CRAFT projects and are available to answer any questions.

The CRAFT Program is still growing and staff looks forward to continuing to work with growers as it moves into Cycle Six and Existing Tree Therapies Round Three. More information on the application process for those cycles will be released in mid-July with an anticipated application opening later in the month.

For more information on the CRAFT Foundation and CRAFT programs, visit www.craftfdn.org.

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, and their monthly newsletter.



2024 Annual Citrus Conference

Florida Citrus Mutual hosted another very well planned and executed annual citrus conference in Bonita Springs in early June. Quite a number of growers, affiliated citrus industry members, industry organizations leaders, political representatives, research personnel, etc. were in attendance.

There were meetings of the Citrus Mutual Board, the Florida Citrus Commission and the CRDF Board for industry folks to participate in. The educational session on Thursday morning proved to be very informative. The Citrus Mutual PAC silent auction raised a bunch of resources for proactive political engagement on Thursday night. There were also multiple venues for social interaction and discourse on a wide range of industry topics.

One highlight of the conference's Thursday night banquet was Mark Barben, who recently completed his junior year at Avon Park High School, giving his Julia C. Black Memorial Speech Contest award-winning oration about how citrus positively impacts our great State. His extremely informative speech was recognized by a standing ovation upon completion.

The Coconut Point Hyatt resort is extremely family friendly with a very affordable room rate for conference participants – so if you have not been part of the conference in the past, you should consider doing so in 2025 when the citrus conference returns to Bonita on June 11th-13th.

One of the highlights of the conference that helps put the many tribulations associated with our industry out of mind for just a few hours is the annual “unofficial” water slide racing competition. This year there was a very large field of 104 participants (49 men, 28 women & 27 kids) in the double elimination event. Our very own grower member Joe B Himrod was crowned Slide King with his overall victory, with Madi Koukos taking the women's title and Will Witmer winning in the 15 and under category. Those involved also appreciated both the winner's prizes and the buckets of liquid refreshments provided pool deck by our friends at Tropicana Brands Group.

So congrats to the staff at Florida Citrus Mutual for putting together another great conference!



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Citrus Soil and Leaf Sampling

We are now 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** required Citrus BMP record keeping documentation. Annual sampling, and its subsequent analysis, provides you a good idea of the nutritional trends that have been occurring within specific grove blocs from year to year. ***Remember to always 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.

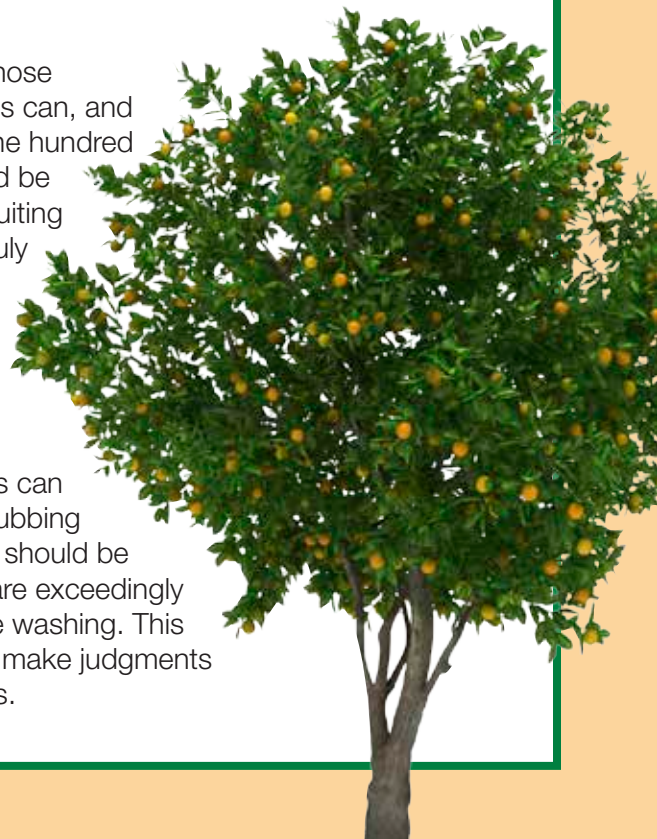
Soil analysis can provide very specific information that you can use in your nutritional program decision-making. This information includes soil pH, phosphorous, calcium, magnesium and copper (*if you specifically request the copper analysis*).

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.





SAVE THE DATE!

Saturday, December 7, 2024

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Survivor Grapefruit Cultivars Set for HLB Trials

The USDA-ARS citrus scion breeding program recently rediscovered several noteworthy grapefruit cultivars at the A.H. Whitmore Foundation Farm in Groveland, Florida. Among these are the Florida Red, Red Blush and Henderson varieties.

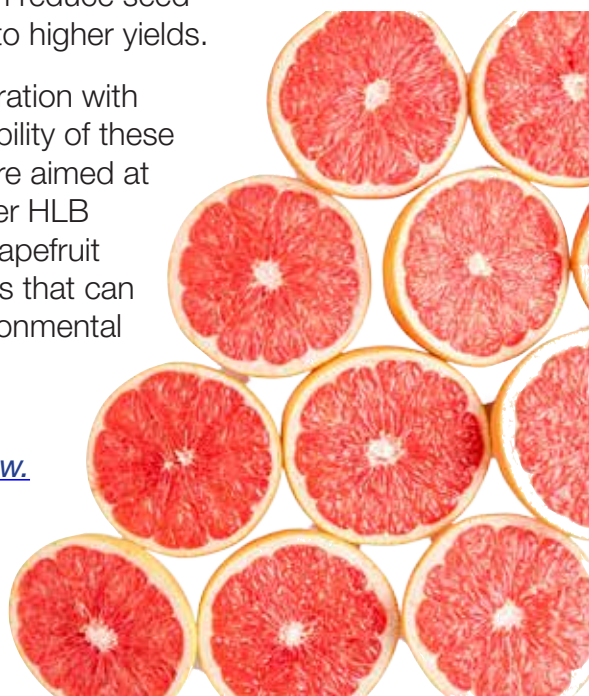
These cultivars were originally selected as long shots from the Whitmore Foundation Farm and were planted in 1986. They have survived freezes and the intense HLB pressure that has devastated well-known cultivars like Ruby Red. These low-seeded red grapefruit varieties have not been tested in Florida replicated trials since the arrival of HLB in 2005. However, they are now ready for trial.

After being cleaned up by FDACS DPI, these cultivars are set to be evaluated for their tolerance to HLB under commercial or semi-commercial conditions. The resilience of these reselected grapefruit is particularly noteworthy. Despite the harsh conditions and disease pressures that have wiped out other cultivars, these survivor trees have endured. This resilience makes them promising candidates for the Florida grapefruit industry, which has been severely impacted by HLB.

In addition to field testing, these varieties may also have the potential to thrive in CUPS structures. CUPS offer a controlled environment that can reduce seed numbers and increase the pack out, potentially leading to higher yields.

USDA-ARS's Matthew Mattia is actively seeking collaboration with commercial growers to assess the performance and viability of these reselected varieties in combating HLB. Mattia's efforts are aimed at offering additional varieties that may perform better under HLB conditions, contributing to a more sustainable Florida grapefruit industry. The goal is to provide growers with new options that can withstand the challenges posed by HLB and other environmental pressures.

Commercial growers interested in participating in this important research are urged to contact Mattia at mattia@usda.gov for additional information. Grower collaboration could play a crucial role in developing a more resilient and productive future for Florida grapefruit.



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Magna-Bon supports regional trade shows, all regional citrus growers' associations, and various sponsorships throughout the year. Although it is not directly citrus related, Magna-Bon helped orchestrate selling blueberries from a local blueberry farm to the Central Florida area during the pandemic shutdown.

You can read the article in the May 2020 issue of Florida Grower.

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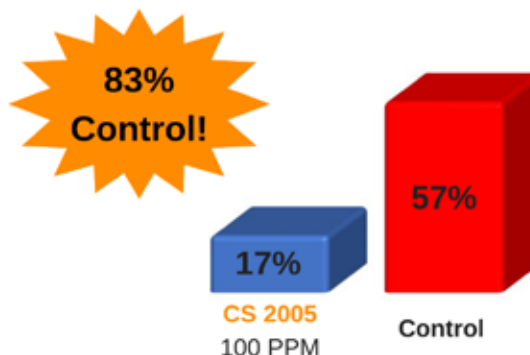
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Brenda Eubanks Burnette was honored as the **2024 Citrus Achievement Award** winner during the recent Annual Citrus Conference in Bonita Springs.

Brenda's initial exposure to the citrus industry came in 1978, when as serving as Miss Winter Haven, she was asked to fill in when the reigning Florida Citrus Queen couldn't make a scheduled appearance at a citrus processing plant. Needing scholarship money for college, Burnette decided to compete for the Florida Citrus Queen title the following year. It took her two tries, but she earned the title in 1981 at age 21. During her reign, she fell in love with the Florida citrus industry and has never looked back. For more than 40 years, she has served the citrus industry in a multitude of ways.

The Florida Citrus Queen program is now known as the Miss Florida Citrus program. While the name has changed and the women do considerably less travel and appearances, the program still provides scholarship money and serves to promote Florida citrus. As the volunteer manager of the Miss Florida Citrus program, Burnette generously gives back to the program that got her started in citrus. In 2015, she revived the Miss Florida Citrus program, which had ceased in 2004. This year, she organized a special centennial celebration for the program, bringing together over 20 past title holders.

Another way Burnette served the citrus industry was in her capacity as executive director of the Florida Citrus Showcase, where she organized the Florida Citrus Festival. "I was hired in 1988 to help bring citrus back to the festival, but the general manager took a job with the carnival, so I had to take on the responsibilities of running the fair as well," recalls Burnette. "I spent five years there, which were a profitable period for the organization."

It was during her time at the Florida Citrus Showcase that Burnette first became involved with the Florida Citrus Hall of Fame. The Hall of Fame was previously managed by the Showcase. She helped preserve the Hall of Fame by moving it out from under the Showcase before it went defunct. Since 2008, Burnette has served as executive director of the Hall of Fame. She has conducted the video interviews for the induction presentations since they began in 2010. She also conducts oral history interviews throughout Florida to capture the memories of past and present citrus industry members.

Among Burnette's many citrus accomplishments is helping to create the Citrus Archives endowment in 2008 at Florida Southern College. The endowment was used to fund an engaged learning program at the school in which students are hired to catalog, scan and digitize the contents of the Citrus Archives, which was started by the late Professor Thomas Mack. "It's the official state of Florida Citrus Archives designated by the state legislature, but there wasn't anything being done with all of the memorabilia and information Professor Mack had collected," says Burnette. "So, we thought it would be a good fit to help organize a program under an archivist that the college was in the process of hiring. The goal was to have the archives serve as a research tool as well as a resource for citrus-related displays." Burnette actively collects all types of citrus memorabilia — from photographs to crate labels to various artifacts — that she donates to the Citrus Archives.

See AWARD on page 14

AWARD, Con't from page 13

One of Burnette's more recent citrus achievements is playing a pivotal role in getting the [Citrus Crate Label Trail](#) up and running. Started in Polk County in 2015, the tour now includes almost 100 citrus crate label signs in Lake, Polk, Manatee and Indian River counties. Putnam and DeSoto counties are exploring the possibility of expanding the tour into their areas.

Part of Burnette's efforts to preserve and promote the Florida Citrus industry involve the written word. In 2015, she debuted her popular [Pieces of the Past](#) monthly column in Citrus Industry magazine. It's just one more way she successfully puts citrus history in the spotlight. She aspires to publish a book that is a compilation of all her past columns.

Burnette has co-authored two books with Jerry Chicone Jr.: "Florida Citrus Crate Labels: An Illustrated History" (1996) and "Florida Citrus Crate Labels – Florida's First Billboards" (2014). "I'm also working on a biographical compilation of the Florida Citrus Hall of Fame members. It's called "Florida Citrus Pioneers – Shaping a State," she says.

All of Burnette's current work in the citrus industry, with the exception of her part-time position as the Florida Citrus Hall of Fame executive director, is on a volunteer basis.

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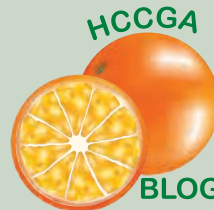
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The Relationship Between Roots and OTC Treatments

Back in the early days of the HLB fight, it was observed that what is going on underground in citrus tree root systems is just as important as what is happening aboveground. In 2013, UF/IFAS and USDA- ARS researchers published that 27% to 40% root loss due to HLB occurs before symptoms show up in the tree aboveground.

There are some hopeful signs that stability or improvement in root mass might be occurring with applications of oxytetracycline (OTC). Aboveground, growers have reported mixed results with the new trunk-injection therapy. While most growers agree it has been a net positive, yield and quality improvements have not been as dramatic as hoped for. But what about the roots?

Huge Dataset

To answer the question about roots, there is a huge dataset available to look for trends. In 1992, Syngenta began a Citrus Soil Assay service to help growers determine if they had treatable levels of phytophthora in their groves. It is one of the largest datasets in citrus and the largest phytophthora root assessment for any crop.

While the service was originally designed to help preserve the lifespan of Ridomil fungicide, it has evolved over the years to provide additional information to growers and researchers who track the data. It also became a way to benchmark root health impacts caused by HLB. The data has demonstrated that HLB and phytophthora interact and cause even more damage to citrus roots.

“The program really has helped us understand phytophthora, but over the last 10 to 15 years, it has become even more important because we’ve been able to track that relationship between it and HLB and their impact on root loss,” says Kendra McCorkle, Syngenta agronomic service representative. “Now, with OTC injections, we believe it is even more important that we help growers understand what’s happening below the ground with the roots.”

As of May 1, more than 500 soil samples had been pulled this year. The five-year average of samples collected is 3,188. It is a big job, and for years Syngenta has utilized a summer internship program to help pull the bulk of these samples. Syngenta representatives also pull samples throughout the year.

1:1 Ratio

Jim Graham, retired UF/IFAS professor of soil microbiology, helped develop the Syngenta soil assay and thresholds for treating phytophthora. He’s tracked the data over the years and continues to consult with Syngenta and the university. Graham also was the lead researcher that demonstrated the amount of root loss happening before HLB symptoms showed up in trees aboveground.

“After we discovered HLB causes root loss, it became apparent that growers really needed a measurement of their root mass, because that affects all things related to nutrient and water uptake in trees,” Graham says. “There is a 1:1 ratio between root loss and fruit loss, meaning if you lose 50% of your roots, you are going to lose 50% of your fruit.”

Research has shown that ratio holds true for other root ailments including phytophthora and nematodes. “This was all greatly reinforced by the root loss we observed from the more recent hurricanes. There was a massive slippery slope of fruit loss starting in 2018 after Hurricane Irma the previous year,” Graham says. “This made us even more confident in the relationship between root loss and yield. So, the root loss resulting from Irma was not recovered the following year or even five years later. Then we had Hurricane Ian in 2022.”

See TREATMENTS on page 16

TREATMENTS, Con't from page 15

Saving Roots

With what is known about HLB, hurricanes and root loss, Graham says the ability to inject OTC the year after Hurricane Ian was a life saver. "I am pretty certain of this," he says. "Had we not had OTC treatments, it could have put these trees in the economic gutter after Ian. Why am I so sure of this? After Irma, we suffered root loss with no real recovery. These trees could not have absorbed another level of root loss like that after Ian."

But after OTC treatments began in 2023, the soil assay data showed things were different following Ian. Graham says there's a high level of confidence that growers who are utilizing the Syngenta service also are using trunk-injection therapy. This allows for observations on how the treatments affect roots.

"Where we measured the massive root loss after Hurricane Irma the following year, we see that root mass (statewide) after Ian is essentially the same," Graham says. "That's good news. So, why didn't we see overall increases in root mass after the first treatment of OTC? Because some of the groves that took a big hit from Ian won't recover or at least not in the first year. The fact that statewide root mass is holding steady is a great sign."

In areas that did not take the brunt of Hurricane Ian's wrath, the data is even more promising. Root assay sample data pulled this year at two groves south of the hurricane's path shows a 25% and 30% increase in root mass. "When you see that kind of massive increase in root density in one season, it is a huge turnaround for tree health," Graham says. "This is unprecedented, and I believe turning these trees in the right direction for the first time since HLB began impacting these groves."

McCorkle sends growers and industry stakeholders' monthly reports that provide results on soil samples. The report breaks down data into four production regions in the state — East Coast, Ridge, South Ridge and Flatwoods/Southwest Florida. The analysis shows that root mass is up year-over-year everywhere except in the Ridge and South Ridge, which took hard hits from Ian.

With proper application, OTC is taken up well by the roots provided the root system is not too far gone. When OTC hits the root system, it controls the HLB bacteria better than in shoots and leaves. This suggests that OTC should help roots survive and support the tree above.

"Research has confirmed that root turnover in a tree before HLB was anywhere from six to twelve months. In the case of HLB, it is every six to 12 weeks," Graham says. "Even HLB-infected trees can regenerate roots; they just can't sustain them to survive. And roots are very expensive for the tree to replace, so that is taking away from everything aboveground. It is catastrophic to the tree to lose roots."

The latest data coming out of the Syngenta soil sampling program suggests OTC is killing the HLB bacteria and improving root mass and density. Graham says this is a great sign and should provide encouragement for growers who plan to continue trunk-injection treatments.

It is worth noting that more roots equal more opportunity for phytophthora, so monitoring and treating for the disease will continue to be important in the coming years.

Courtesy of Citrus Industry Magazine



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Annual Agricultural Labor Relations Forum

The 50th Annual Agricultural Labor Relations Forum will be held on August 28th-30th at the Wyndham Grand Orlando Resort Bonnet Creek.

This annual seminar educates agricultural employers, including growers, shippers, farm labor contractors, and other employers, on compliance with agricultural labor laws and sound labor relations practices.

You can go FFVA's website at: www.ffva.com. for additional information about the Forum's educational schedule and/or to register.

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 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.

USDA Citrus Crop Forecast Update

June, 2024

All Oranges 17.9 Million Boxes

The 2023-2024 Florida all orange forecast released on June 12th by the USDA Agricultural Statistics Board is 17.9 million boxes. The total includes 6.76 million boxes of non-Valencia oranges (early, mid-season, and Navel varieties) and 11.1 million boxes of Valencia oranges.

Non-Valencia Oranges 6.76 Million Boxes

The forecast of non-Valencia orange production is 6.76 million boxes, down 40,000 boxes from the previous forecast. The Navel forecast, included in the non-Valencia portion of the forecast is 180,000 boxes, 3 percent of the non-Valencia total.

Valencia Oranges 11.1 Million Boxes

The forecast of Valencia orange production is 11.1 million boxes, up 100,000 boxes from the previous forecast.

All Grapefruit 1.79 Million Boxes

The forecast of all grapefruit production is 1.79 million boxes. The white grapefruit forecast is decreased 10,000 boxes to 240,000 boxes. The red grapefruit forecast is unchanged at 1.55 million boxes.

Tangerines and Mandarins 450,000 Boxes

The forecast for tangerines and mandarins is 450,000 boxes, down 50,000 boxes from the previous forecast. This production level is 6 percent less than last season's final production of 480,000 boxes. This forecast number includes all certified tangerine and tangelo varieties.



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

2024 Citrus Fun Shoot at Quail Creek - December 7th

Planning is now underway for the **2024 HCCGA Citrus Sporting Clays Fun Shoot**. While our Fun Shoot has evolved over the past 27 plus years, the key concepts remain the same – providing a great opportunity for fellowship with others within our industry and the greater agricultural community, fun clay target shooting, great and plentiful food and some fabulous green bird station and raffle prizes.

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

We are very pleased to announce that the Citrus Fun Shoot is returning to **Quail Creek Sporting Ranch** for 2024. We have held the Citrus Fun Shoot at Quail Creek every year since 2002 (*when they opened for business*) except for last year, and look forward to returning there for this year's shoot.

Thanks again to our good friends at OK Corral Gun Club for hosting us at their great facility last year, however the size of our event requires the space and food preparation capacity that Quail Creek can better provide.

We anticipate getting our shoot flier to our members and the public this summer for shoot registration to commence. However, if you want to get your company involved in this year's event or have any questions now – just reach out to Ray at the HCCGA office.

We are now in the process of finalizing the shoot's Title Sponsors list in order to complete our shoot flier. While it appears that almost all of last year's major sponsors will be sponsors again this year – just about every year once the flier comes out, some associate member inevitably says *"boy I wish I could have been a title 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 ton of great PR), get with Ray or Jan at the HCCGA office ASAP for more details.

For information about Quail Creek Sporting Ranch, a full service world class shooting destination located just north of Okeechobee, check out their website at: <https://quailcreeksportingranch.com>.

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

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Improving Herbicide Efficiency

UF/IFAS weed scientist Ramdas Kanissery offers numerous tips and observations for improving herbicide efficiency. They included:

- Use optimal herbicide rates. That includes high labeled rates on heavy weed infestations and on weeds in a mature growth stage.
- These post-emergent herbicide mixes will not have favorable outcomes: fluazifop-P-butyl (Fusilade) plus 2,4-D (Embed Extra); glyphosate plus carfentrazone (Aim); and glyphosate plus glufosinate (Scout, Rely 280, etc.).
- When mixing glyphosate and 2,4-D (Embed Extra), avoid mixing issues by increasing water application volumes and by only adding glyphosate when the spray tank is full.
- Use an appropriate surfactant; it helps improve herbicide retention, coverage and efficacy.
- Use suggested adjuvants.
- Apply herbicide when there is ample sunlight. Mid-day applications enhance the effectiveness of glufosinate. Broadleaf weeds tend to be more sensitive to the time-of-day effect than grasses.
- When spraying during the rainy season, give at least six hours of dry period. Generally, rainfall within six hours after application reduces effectiveness.
- Efficacy of post-emergent systemic herbicides glyphosate, 2,4-D (Embed Extra) and sethoxydim (Poast) is reduced when temperatures are above 95 degrees. At that temperature, injury potential to the tree is also high.
- Spray herbicide when there is low wind.
- Bring pre-emergent herbicides into the weed control program. There can be about 130 million viable weed seeds in an acre of soil.
- Tank mixing pre-emergence residual herbicides helps cut down the rates and manages herbicide tolerance issues.

Finding the right time to apply post-emergent herbicides for controlling weeds in citrus groves is challenging in the summer months due to frequent rain. Rainy conditions delay grove maintenance, including herbicide spraying, while also impacting the effectiveness of the herbicides.

Monitoring weather forecasts and identifying optimal conditions for herbicide applications can help achieve the best results. Below are some tips for timing herbicide applications in citrus groves during rainy seasons.

Herbicide Application Before Rain

- To apply herbicides before it rains, ensure there is enough time for the herbicide to dry and be absorbed by the plants. This necessary interval between application and subsequent rainfall, known as the rainfast period, is crucial for effective post-emergent herbicide performance. Rainfall shortly after spraying can reduce herbicide absorption, translocation and weed control. If rain occurs before the herbicide becomes rainfast, its performance will be compromised. Check the product label for specific rainfast requirements of each herbicide.
- Table 1 lists the rainfast periods for various post-emergent herbicides used in citrus groves based on label recommendations.



Herbicide Product(s)	Active Ingredient	Rainfast Period (Hours)
Aim	Carfentrazone	1
Gramoxone SL	Paraquat	0.5
Roundup PowerMAX	Glyphosate	0.5
Roundup WeatherMAX	Glyphosate	0.5
Scout		
Rely 280	Glyphosate	4
Embed Extra	2,4-D	6+
Poast	Sethoxydim	1
Fusilade DX	Fluazifop-butyl	1
Treevix	Saflufenacil	1

****Based on information from the product labels****

Herbicide Application After Rain

- Avoid spraying immediately after rain. Wait until the leaves are dry before applying herbicides. Spraying on wet leaves can wash away the herbicide, dilute it and reduce its effectiveness.
- Make sure no additional rain is expected soon after application, as quick sprays between showers are not effective.
- Herbicides work best when applied to dry leaves, allowing proper absorption.

Consider Wind

- During rainy seasons, check wind conditions before applying herbicides. Spraying in windy conditions can cause herbicide drift, potentially damaging citrus trees. Avoid spraying if the wind has picked up ahead of the rain.
- By keeping these strategies in mind, growers can improve the effectiveness of herbicide applications in citrus groves despite rainy weather.

In addition to discussing herbicides, Kanissery reports that cover cropping, an emergent practice in Florida citrus production, may contribute to longer-term weed management in row middles. Read more about cover crops at: <https://citrusindustry.net/2022/03/11/cover-crops-in-citrus-less-weeds-more-microbes>.

Kanissery is an assistant professor at the UF/IFAS SWFREC in Immokalee. See his full Florida Citrus Growers' Institute presentation at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KBfAa5NwCos>.

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- **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
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