



Citrus connection



HIGHLANDS COUNTY CITRUS GROWERS **President's Column** by Riley McKenna

As we move toward the exit of summer, optimistic about our tree health and anxiously waiting to see the quality fall will bring, we need to begin preparing for the next growing season & its foreseeable challenges. There is a lot of uncertainty with the fertilizer market, and ongoing global tensions, which may make staying on top of grove nutrition feel more difficult.

However, it's more important than ever to focus on the fundamentals. Proper fertilization and balanced nutrition are essential to the health of your grove and the success of your harvest. However, with rising costs and potential delays in supplies, securing the right nutrients may require extra planning and flexibility.

What You Need to Know:

Global Tensions: Ongoing conflicts, like the situation in Israel, could disrupt key exports from the Middle East, potentially tightening supply and driving prices higher.

Fertilizer Prices: If tensions ease and China resumes fertilizer exports, we may see some relief in input costs, but this remains uncertain.

To add to the issues, once goods arrive in the USA, changes in import destinations are creating longer shipping routes, which is further delaying deliveries and increasing shipping costs.

What This Means for You:

Stay Flexible: Watch the market trends closely and be prepared to adjust pricing or sourcing strategies.

Plan for Uncertainty: Given the volatility, explore different sources of fertilizers— the main concern is ammonium nitrate.

Think outside the box to obtain your nutritional and budgeting goals.

While the low prices of corn and soybeans may help curb dramatic price hikes, the unpredictable nature of the global market means that it's wise to stay flexible and be ready to adapt if costs rise unexpectedly.

Staying focused on the basics—proper grove nutrition and proactive planning—will help you weather any changes that may come your way. By remaining prepared and adaptable, we will continue to set our groves up for success, no matter what challenges the future holds.

We extend our sincere gratitude to Ray and Florida Citrus Mutual for their tireless efforts in grower education, especially in raising awareness for available programs and guiding growers through the process of securing those funds. These opportunities provide essential support that can help growers remain sustainable and competitive in a challenging marketplace. Your work is deeply appreciated. Your leadership ensures that our industry is better informed, better supported, and better positioned for long-term success.

Riley McKenna

AUG 2025

- Citrus Fun Shoot
- Preliminary Citrus Report
- CRAFT Update
- NRCS Programs Application
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- Citrus Field Days/Displays
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- HCCGA Member Directory
- Citrus EXPO
- Fruit Drop in HLB Citrus
- Ag-Venture 2025
- H₂O Use Under Covers



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2025 Calendar of Events

October 9

Initial USDA Citrus Crop Forecast

November 4-6

Ag-Venture @ Highlands County Fairgrounds

December 6

HCCGA Citrus Fun Shoot @ Quail Creek Sporting Ranch

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



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Executive Director's Report

BY RAY ROYCE

Congratulations to Robin Loftin, her team at AgNet Media and all of the Expo vendors and presenters for executing another great Citrus & Specialty Crop Expo. If you missed the Expo, you can view the education seminars online at: <https://crec.ifas.ufl.edu/citrus-research/presentations>.

Our friends at AgNet Media are truly committed to our industry, and provide a wide range of very educational information through a multitude of communicative avenues – so thanks to the AgNet Media folks for all of your work!



The application period for Cycle Seven of the traditional CRAFT **New Tree Planting Program** and Round Four of the **Existing Tree Therapies Program** is now open. The application process has been simplified, and there is significant funding available, so Growers should definitely consider contacting CRAFT staff to see how the CRAFT program may be able to help them. This program is in place, and managed, for you to take advantage of!

Any interested grower has until **Friday, October 3, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. EST.** to submit their applications. There is additional information contained in this newsletter or go online at www.craftfdh.org.

Speaking of the CRAFT program – the Florida Citrus Mutual and CRAFT staffs held three very well attended and informative meetings across the citrus belt on Sept. 2-4. It was encouraging to see how many growers turned out (*roughly one hundred in the Lake Placid meeting*) to learn more about the multiple potential revenue sources that they may be able to access for their operations.

There was also information shared at the meeting about how growers should consider handling nonproductive or fallow citrus properties. Just a reminder that if you have taken a grove out of production, you should notify the Property Appraisers office (*contact Sam Klatt at skatt@hcpao.org or 863-402-6667 in Highlands County*) in order to get your taxable valuation adjusted.

Our 28th Annual Citrus Sporting Clays Fun Shoot will take place at Quail Creek Sporting Ranch this year on Saturday, December 6th. Even if you don't shoot sporting clays (*and believe me - you do not need to be able to shoot very well if you want to participate*) you may want to join us for our famous Seafood and Prime Rib Luncheon and raffle drawings. Registration is now open and there is a registration flier in this newsletter, so sign up early!

All current Association members should have received their 2025 HCCGA Member Directory in the mail recently. The member directory is designed to be a great year round resource tool. So I encourage you to take a quick look at who our Associate members and advertisers are; they are supporting our industry and Association, and I hope you will give them due consideration when you are in the market for goods and services.

The initial USDA Citrus Crop Forecast for the 2025/2026 season will be released at noon on Thursday, October 9th. While total citrus acreage in Florida has continued to drop over the past several years – hopefully the crop on the trees today will be in a better position to make it to the fruit trailer this season.

While we strive to keep our members as informed as possible on a wide range of local issues, 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.

Thanks, Ray



Info Notes



Citrus BMP Manual

Earlier this year a new Citrus BMP Manual replaced the 2012 Citrus Manual reflecting advancements in agricultural science, water quality research and on-the-ground practices. The practices were developed by the FDACS Office of Agricultural Water Policy in coordination with the FDEP, UF/IFAS and industry experts.

The good news is that producers do not need to take any action in regards to the change in BMP manuals at this time. You will only be asked to “re-enroll” in the BMP program at the time of a site audit visit, or if you participate in a cost share program.

The Citrus BMP Manual can be accessed at:
<https://ccmedia.fdacs.gov/content/download/25410/file/Florida-Citrus-Operations-2024-Edition-Water-Quality-and-Water-Quantity-Best-Management-Practices.pdf>

Florida Citrus Growers' Institute

The 2025 Florida Citrus Growers' Institute was held on April 8th on the SFSC campus. 2025 Growers Institute presentations are now available on the Citrus Agents website at: <https://citrusagents.ifas.ufl.edu>.

2024-2025 Florida Citrus Production Guides

The 2024-2025 Florida Citrus Production Guides are available for pick up at the Highlands County Extension office (*the HCCGA office has a few as well*) or the handbooks are available online (with printable sections) at: <https://crec.ifas.ufl.edu/resources/production-guide>.

TEAM Card & Sales Tax Exemption Forms for Ag Uses

Florida Farm Bureau has a very informative website page listing a number of agriculturally related items that may be exempt from Florida sales tax. It also has info about the TEAM card. It can be found at: <https://www.floridafarmbureau.org/agricultural-sales-tax-exemptions-in-florida>.

UF/IFAS Research Website

The Citrus Research and Education Center (CREC) website at <https://crec.ifas.ufl.edu/citrus-research> 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.

Growing Citrus - A multipronged HLB strategy

This booklet is a brief guide to the most important things growers should keep in mind when developing HLB management plans for groves at: <https://crec.ifas.ufl.edu/citrus-research/presentations/citrus-expo-2024/booklets/growing-citrus>.

Keeping Citrus Growers Informed

An informative research book containing updates on more than 70 ongoing UF/IFAS research project at: <https://crec.ifas.ufl.edu/citrus-research/presentations/citrus-expo-2024/booklets/citrus-growers-informed>.

All In For Citrus Podcasts for Growers

UF/IFAS and AgNet Media 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 on disease related issues. The podcast complements the 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.

FDOC Webinars

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



Citrus Fun Shoot

Quail Creek - December 6th

Registration is now open for the **2025 HCCGA Citrus Sporting Clays Fun Shoot**. So make plans now to join us on **Saturday December 6th** for our 28th Annual Citrus Fun Shoot and Prime Rib & Seafood luncheon. A shoot registration flier is included in this month's newsletter. However, if you have any questions about how to get your company even more involved in this year's event - just reach out to Ray at the HCCGA office.



The Citrus Fun Shoot will take place at **Quail Creek Sporting Ranch**, a full service world class shooting destination located just north of Okeechobee. If you want more information about Quail Creek Sporting Ranch, check out their website at: <https://quailcreeksportingranch.com>.

While our Fun Shoot has certainly evolved over the past 28 plus years, the key things remain the same for us – providing a great opportunity for fellowship with others within our industry and greater agricultural community, fun clay target shooting, great food and some fabulous green bird station and raffle prizes.

Thank you to our 2025 Citrus Fun Shoot Title Sponsors: **Syngenta, CRAFT, Alan Jay Fleet Sales, Tropicana Brands Group, Trademark Nitrogen, Cutrale USA, Wedgworth Fertilizer, Glade & Grove Supply, AgNet Media, Magna-Bon, Hood Citrus Caretaking, Peace River Citrus Products, Florida Power & Light, Everglades Equipment Group, Duke Energy, Perricone Farms/Natalie's, and Cowpokes Watering Hole Restaurant.**

Our Seafood & Prime Rib Luncheon sponsor is **Farm Credit of Florida.**

Florida Senate President Ben Albritton is sponsoring our live scoring updates, and **Highlands County Board Attorney Sherry Sutphen** is sponsoring the "shooters only" gun drawing again this year.

Our Green Bird Station Sponsors so far are: **Marden Industries/SuperTrak, Glades Electric Cooperative** and **Tree Defender** (who will also be providing cold beer refreshments after shooting is completed again this year).

*At this time we have a couple of **Green Bird Station Sponsorship** (\$750.00) slots left if your firm would like to garner some great PR prior to the shoot in our newsletter, through multiple mechanisms during the event and again in our newsletter and member directory after the shoot. Not only will every shoot participant go through your sponsored station and have a chance to win one of the great prizes you sponsored - you will receive naming recognition on signage and drawing slips, plus you can be there to draw the two winning names - so give us a call for more details.*

Look forward to seeing many of you at **Quail Creek Sporting Ranch** on **Saturday, December 6th**!



Collaborating with Growers to Develop Programs for Their Needs

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ker management programs.

We also support the regional tradeshows, conferences,

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



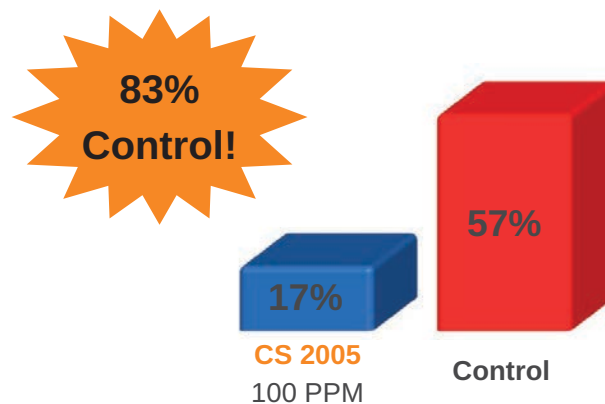
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Citrus Research & Education Center: UF/IFAS
Dr. Jim Graham



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www.MagnaBon.com



Commercial Citrus Inventory Preliminary Report

The annual Commercial Citrus Inventory Preliminary Report was released on August 29th indicating that Florida's total citrus acreage is now 208,183 acres.

The bad news is that our State has continued to lose acreage every year since 2000, when Florida had 665,529 citrus acres. The good news is that new citrus plantings last year, reported at 7,512 acres, are up from the previous season's 4,751 acres.

Polk County leads in citrus acreage with 48,473 acres (7.25 million trees), followed by Highlands County at 37,561 acres (6.28 million trees). The only other counties with more than 10,000 acres are DeSoto (32,890 acres), Hardee (26,840), Hendry (16,012) and St. Lucie (15,209).

Orange acreage is now 183,860 acres. Valencia acreage accounts for 64% of the total orange acreage. Non-Valencia acreage represents 34%, and the remaining orange acreage is unidentified. Grapefruit acreage is now at 12,787 acres. Specialty fruit acreage is at 11,536 acres with Tangerines and Tangelos accounting for just over 50% of the specialty fruit, with 5,774 acres. The remaining acreage is other citrus, with a total of 5,762 acres.

The USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service cooperating with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, issued the report. The full report can be accessed at: [ccipr25.pdf](#)

Source: USDA NASS

New IPC Options

Following a trip to Brazil, Riley McKenna and Trevor Murphy decided to explore IPC options for Florida growers. The result is a larger bag, which will provide protection for resets for up to 3 years at an economical price. They are looking for fellow growers who are resetting with IPCs to coordinate on orders for bulk savings. Please contact Riley at 863-214-7918 or Trevor at 863-443-1847 for more information.



The tree on the right was in an IPC 6 months longer than the tree on the left.



New IPCs are 40inx40inx6ft



Traditional IPC vs larger IPC

This message is a paid advertisement, and should not be interpreted as an endorsement by the Highlands County Citrus Growers Association (HCCGA). The information, opinions and/or views presented by HCCGA for the advertiser is for informational purposes only and should not be taken as an Association recommendation, approval, or endorsement of any product, service, or idea.

Syngenta Citrus Internships - Summer 2026

Company Overview

Syngenta is a leading agriculture company helping to improve global food security by enabling millions of farmers to make better use of available resources. Through world class science and innovative crop solutions, our 30,000 people in over 90 countries are working to transform how crops are grown. We are committed to rescuing land from degradation, enhancing biodiversity and revitalizing rural communities. There's never been a more important time to join Syngenta.

Program Overview

When you are a citrus intern with Syngenta, you will gain hands-on experience in the ag industry. This is a paid internship that also provides a vehicle for work use. You will be assigned to a mentor and a territory for your summer project. You will gain experience with territory management along with pest and disease identification. The internship presents opportunities to gain sales and marketing experience, exposure to the citrus industry, as well as opportunities within Syngenta Crop Protection.

Intern Focus

- Pest scouting support (miticides/insecticides)
 - Minecto Pro, Voliam Flexi, AgriFlex, & AgriMek
- Soil sampling support (fungicides)
 - Ridomil & Orondis



Qualifications

- Seeking future employment in the Florida Agriculture Industry.
- Basic familiarity with production agriculture.
- Basic familiarity with pest, disease, and weed control.
- Basic computer skills.
- Willingness to work outdoors.
- Self motivated, detail oriented, honest, and personable.
- Ability to relocate to or originally from one of the following counties; Polk, Highlands, Hardee, Desoto, Hendry, Collier, Lee, Okeechobee, Martin, Osceola, St. Lucie, or Indian River.
- Sophomore or Junior level (Seniors will be considered).
- Satisfactory results of a preemployment background check, drug test, and driving record evaluation.



Please apply via the QR Code or link below. Complete the survey and upload your resume.

*Application Deadline is
Wednesday, November 12th 2025*

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SyngentaCitrusIntern>

For Questions, Please contact:

Kendra McCorkle
FL Citrus Internship Coordinator
772-216-2091
kendra.mccorkle@syngenta.com

Kim Randolph
AgriEdge Specialist
772-538-4189
kim.randolph@syngenta.com

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CRAFT Update



The CRAFT Foundation Board of Directors and staff are excited to announce the opening of applications for our new program year. Thanks to historic levels of funding from the Florida Legislature and the leadership of Senate President Ben Albritton and Commissioner Wilton Simpson, CRAFT will receive \$100 million of funding for this year's programs.

This year we have four programs open for applications, including Cycle 7 Traditional New Planting Program, Fast Track Program, Emerging Varieties Program, and Existing Tree Therapies Program.

October 3, 2025 at 5:00 PM, is the deadline for all applications.

We have had significant interest in our Fast Track Program, which provides funding for growers that purchase, **after August 1, 2025, existing nursery stock (aka "uncommitted" trees that are not under contract)** and plant the citrus trees on or before December 31, 2025. Those growers will receive a participation fee of \$40 per tree and full payment upon confirmation of planting. All other requirements of the Cycle 7 Traditional New Planting program apply, including a 6-year contract to submit harvest data and other program compliance requirements. Applications will be required to submit the tree purchase contract with their application and CRAFT is verifying the contract details with the nursery.

The program announcement flyer provides an overview of this year's programs, which have been redesigned to provide an efficient application and participation experience for the grower. Please visit <https://craftfdn.org/apply-now/> to review the program rules, application portal, and FAQs. ***Please pay careful attention to the program requirements and payment structures as those may have changed from prior cycles.***

Please direct any questions to Executive Director Steven Hall at Steven@craftfdn.org or (863) 333-2931, Assistant Program Manager Tina Buice at Tina@craftfdn.org, or Scientific Coordinator Carisa Keller at Carisa@craftfdn.org.

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CRAFT is a grower-driven program, moving lab and research solutions into commercial groves for commercial-scale field trials; collecting data on results of commercial field trials; and creating an integrated data management solution.

Applications are OPEN!

Visit www.CRAFTFDN.org to APPLY

\$100 million funding available.

Complete program rules available on website.

2025 Available CRAFT Programs

Cycle 7 - Traditional New Tree Planting Program, which evaluates grower recommended rootstock/scion combinations in real-world commercial conditions.

- \$35 per tree participation payment.
- Grower applies to plant any commercially available citrus tree varieties by June 30, 2027.
- Requires a six-year commitment to annually submit harvest data and comply with grower participation agreement.

Cycle 7 - "Fast Track" Nursery Stock Program

- \$40 per tree participation payment.
- Fully paid upon planting of available nursery stock by December 31, 2025.
- Requires a six-year commitment to annually submit harvest data and comply with grower participation agreement.

Cycle 7 - Emerging Varieties Program, which evaluates promising new varieties.

- \$40 per tree participation payment.
- Grower applies to plant selected unreleased or recently released citrus varieties on CRAFT eligible list (on CRAFT website) by June 30, 2027.
- Requires an eight-year commitment to annually submit harvest data and comply with grower participation agreement.

Round 4 - Existing Tree Therapies Program, which evaluates novel therapeutic treatments in existing, mature trees.

- \$350 per acre of treated citrus trees
- Growers may use approved treatments, including: oxytetracycline; Brassinosteroids; 2,4-D; gibberellic acid; or approved Stage Two "Grove First" therapies.
- Requires a Three-Year Commitment to submit harvest data and comply with grower participation agreement

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE:

- Any commercial citrus grower in Florida may apply.
- Groves must be enrolled in FDACS BMPs
- Current CRAFT participants must be in good-standing in order to be eligible.

Additional Program Benefits:

- Annual Soil and Plant Tissue sampling
- Annual field and aerial drone surveys
- Growers may receive results of sampling and surveys at no cost.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Steven Hall, Executive Director
Steven@craftfdn.org / 863.333.2931

NRCS Conservation Programs Application Period Open

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Florida announces Fiscal Year 2026 (October 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026) financial assistance opportunities for agricultural producers and forestry operations through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).

While NRCS accepts applications year-round, Florida producers and landowners should **apply no later than Oct. 3, 2025**, to be considered for funding in the FY2026 current cycle. If applications are received after the signup period for FY2026, applications will automatically be considered during future funding cycles.



Application cutoff periods allow NRCS to screen-and-rank applications for those with the highest conservation benefits across Florida's landscapes, including cropland, grazing lands, and private non-industrial forestlands. Contract obligations for the highest ranked applications are scheduled for end of June 2026.

Through EQIP, NRCS provides agricultural producers with one-on-one help and financial assistance to plan and implement improvements, or what NRCS calls conservation practices. Together, NRCS and producers invest in solutions that conserve natural resources for the future while improving agricultural operations.

CSP offers opportunities for producers to expand on existing conservation efforts by applying new conservation practices, enhancements, and bundles. These new activities will help enhance natural resources and improve the operation.

If you decide to apply for CSP, the local NRCS conservation planner will have a one-on-one consultation with you to evaluate your current management system and the natural resources on your land. You will then work with the NRCS conservation planner to select new CSP conservation activities based on your management objectives for your operation.

Application Requirements for All Programs

Applicants will need to provide information necessary to establish farm records and certifications outlined below.

- ☐ Farm records established or updated with the Farm Service Agency for the applicant and the land.
- ☐ Be in compliance with highly erodible land and wetland conversation requirements.
- ☐ Meet the adjusted gross income (AGI) and payment limitation provisions.
- ☐ Applicable documentation required for signature authority.
- ☐ Have control of land where "control" means possession of the land by ownership, lease, or other agreement.
- ☐ Written concurrence from the landowner to apply a structural or vegetative conservation practice.
- ☐ Be in compliance with provisions for protecting the interests of tenants and sharecroppers.

For additional information, or to access an application, contact either the Sebring NRCS office (863) 385-7853 or carlos.torres2@usda.gov or the Okeechobee USDA Service Center (863) 763-3345 Ext. 2 or jenny.hoover@usda.gov. You can also download an EQIP fact sheet at: www.nrcs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2022-10/EQIP-fact-sheet.pdf or a CSP fact sheet at: www.nrcs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2022-10/Is%20CSP%20right%20for%20me.pdf.

Applications will be accepted until **October 3, 2025**.

UF/IFAS Launches New Magazine

UF/IFAS has debuted a new publication, the **UF/IFAS Citrus Magazine**, which is an Extension initiative to deliver Florida's geographically dispersed citrus research to growers.

"You can expect three editions per year, featuring articles written by UF/IFAS citrus scientists and Extension faculty across the state," said Michael Rogers, UF/IFAS statewide citrus research and Extension coordinator and director of the Citrus Research and Education Center, in the August 2025 edition. "Our focus is on research you can use — tools, strategies and insights that can help improve your operation today. We'll also spotlight promising research that's on the horizon."

Topics addressed in the first issue include:

- Horticultural grove management
- Individual protective covers during hurricane season
- Pest and disease management
- The Millennium Block
- Plant growth regulators
- Crop insurance

The magazine's editorial committee consists of Rogers, Ute Albrecht, Michelle Danyluk, Megan Dewdney, Lauren Diepenbrock, Mark Ritenour, Ariel Singerman, Matt Smith and Tripti Vashisth. Jamie Burrow and Tonya Weeks are responsible for editorial and graphic design, respectively.

UF/IFAS Citrus Magazine is available in both print and digital formats.

The August 2025 digital edition can be viewed at: https://issuu.com/ufifascitrus/docs/uf_ifas_citrus_magazine_-_august_2025, along with other UF/IFAS publications, **Keeping Florida Citrus Growers Informed** and the **Florida Citrus 2025-2026 Production Guide**

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CitrusIndustry.net

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Don't miss the digital edition of Specialty Crop Grower magazine for bonus coverage and videos.

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2025 Citrus Field Days & Variety Displays

UF/IFAS and the citrus breeding teams have set some dates for this year's field days, variety displays, and open houses. These events present excellent opportunities to converse with research team members and learn about their priorities, methods and results. These days also provide an opportunity to sample the fruit of the latest promising selections, as well as tour test plantings and observe in the field tree performance. So save the dates on your calendar for these events:

UF/IFAS Field Days

Visit three different sites to view the latest promising scion and rootstock combinations in field trials. Each field day will begin at 8:30 am. **Registration is requested for each field day.**

Field Day #1 - September 17, 2025

UF/IFAS Citrus Research and Education Center
700 Experiment Station Road, Lake Alfred

Meet at CREC and then caravan to J. Griffin Properties in Haines City. View OLL budlines on multiple rootstocks

<https://september2025fieldday.eventbrite.com>

Field Day #2 - October 8, 2025

UF/IFAS Citrus Research and Education Center
700 Experiment Station Road, Lake Alfred

Learn the latest on protected cropping systems in citrus (CUPS and IPCs)

<https://october2025fieldday.eventbrite.com>

Field Day #3 - November 19, 2025

UF/IFAS Eagle Lake Block, Eagle Lake
Coordinates: 27.97356° N, 81.75966°W

Visit the site with multiple UF/IFAS-bred selections including OLL-DC-36 and OLL-DC-40

<https://november2025fieldday.eventbrite.com>

UF/IFAS Gainesville Citrus Variety Display

The Teaching Orchard

1786 IFAS Research Drive, Gainesville, FL

Date: November 14, 2025 @ 10:00 AM

Dr. Chaparro and his team will provide research presentations on their citrus breeding program. Attendees will have the opportunity to sample mandarin, sweet orange and grapefruit-like breeding selections and provide feedback. Juice samples of new orange-like and juicing mandarins will be provided. A tour of the breeding field plots and replicated tests *may* be available after the main program. Lunch will be provided at the end of the event.

RSVP requested by November 10, 2025 to pchaires@nvdmc.org to facilitate meal planning.



See **FIELD DAYS** on page 15

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FIELD DAYS, Con't. from page 14

Whitmore Foundation Farm Open House, Research Field Tour & Variety Display USDA-ARS and Florida Citrus Research Foundation

23402 USDA Rd. Groveland FL 34736

Date: December 5, 2025 @ 10:00 AM

Attendees will be treated to a hay-ride tour of the farm. The tour will include a new early orange planting, scion variety development, rootstock trials, the Whitmore rootstock seed-block, a demonstration planting, and more. There have been many improvements to farm infrastructure over the past couple years. Old research has been removed. New research is advancing, and new plantings have gone in the ground.

The ongoing work at the farm, as well as infrastructure improvements were made possible through support from the State of Florida and the Florida Department of Citrus. USDA-ARS researchers will be present on and after the tour to discuss projects and answer questions. After the hayride, there will be citrus and avocado displays for sampling. Feedback from these displays is immensely helpful to the breeding teams. At the conclusion of the event, we will have a hot lunch graciously sponsored by Florida Citrus Mutual.

RSVP requested by November 28, 2025 to pchaires@nvdmc.org to facilitate meal planning.



**UF/IFAS Citrus Plant Improvement Team, Lake Alfred Fruit Display
Citrus Research and Education Center, Lake Alfred.**

700 Experiment Station Rd. Lake Alfred FL 33850

Date: December 17, 2025 @ 1:00 PM

This variety display will feature oranges, orange-like hybrids, grapefruit and grapefruit hybrids, as well as specialty fruit and possibly specialty fruit. The Plant Improvement Team generally prepares juice for sampling. Varieties are shown in whole, cut and/or sectioned forms. Attendees are requested to complete a survey form while they make their way through the display. The information gathered from the survey helps inform release and other decisions made by the research team. Attendees should budget 45 minutes to an hour to experience the entire display. Researchers will be available for questions and discussion.

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FDACS BMP Cost Share for 2025–26 FY

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) is now accepting applications for the 2025–2026 fiscal year through its Best Management Practices (BMP) Cost-Share Program. Agricultural producers are encouraged to apply via the online portal or reach out to their local FDACS field staff for assistance.

Eligible producers may receive up to 90% reimbursement on approved projects that contribute to improvements in water quality, water conservation, and nutrient management. **Please note: all projects must receive official FDACS approval before any work begins in order to qualify for reimbursement.** Reimbursement levels are based on the producer's commitment to data collection:

- **75% reimbursement** – No data collection required
- **80% reimbursement** – Two years of data collection
- **90% reimbursement** – Four years of data collection

Data is collected every two years and coincides with FDACS Implementation Verification (IV) site visits.

New this year: All projects must be completed and final paperwork submitted by **June 1, 2026**.

To learn more about program eligibility, data collection requirements, or to submit an application, visit the official BMP Cost-Share Program page: <https://www.fdacs.gov/Agriculture-Industry/Water/Agricultural-Best-Management-Practices/BMP-Cost-Share-Program>

For additional assistance, contact Kasey Deuberry, Southwest Florida Environmental Manager, at (850) 464-8066 or via email at kasey.deuberry@fdacs.gov.



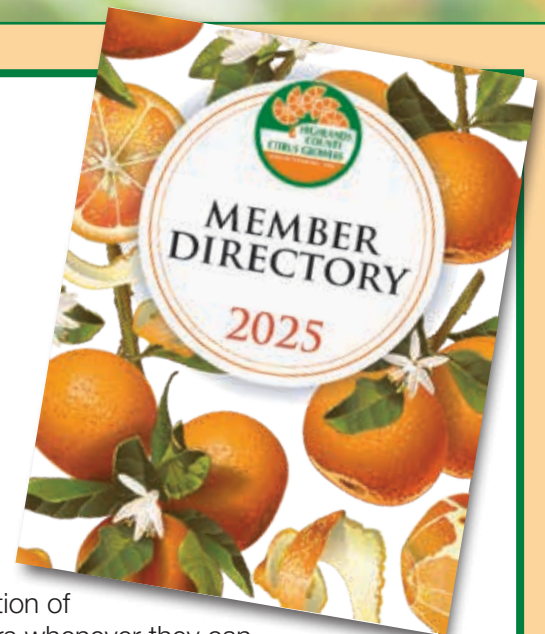
CRAFT's mission is to move lab and research solutions into commercial groves for commercial-scale field trials, collect data on the results of those field trials and create an integrated data management system allowing growers, researchers and other interested parties to analyze the efficacy and efficiency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

For more information, visit CRAFTfdn.org or contact Steven Hall - 863.682-1115 or Steven@CRAFTfdn.org.

2025 HCCGA Member Directory

All current Grower and Associate members should have received their 2025 HCCGA Member Directory via the US mail in late August. This year's 68 page 8.5 X 11 full color booklet includes Association information such as: Grower contact information, Associate Member Bios, Sponsorship Recognitions, Board Members, Officers, etc. So make sure to keep it in a convenient location and utilize it.

Thank you again to the sixty-four HCCGA Associate members who through their advertising investment made the production and distribution of this directory possible. Please try to patronize the directory's advertisers whenever they can provide a good or service your business requires.



Citrus & Specialty Crop Expo

This year's Citrus & Specialty Crop Expo in Tampa provided attendees with more than 20 presentations dedicated to citrus. It was the largest learning opportunity of the year for growers of the state's signature crop.

Rick Dantzler, chief operating officer of the Citrus Research and Development Foundation, kicked off the event on an optimistic note. While growers wait on the "tree of the future" that will provide significant tolerance to HLB, Dantzler is bullish on current therapies like oxytetracycline (OTC) trunk injection.

"This third year of oxytetracycline therapy is going to make a huge difference," said Dantzler. "Root mass is increasing. Leaf canopy is almost completely recovered. Those are precursors to more and better fruit. It's just simple plant physiology. That's how a plant works. It is absolutely going to make a huge difference this next year."

Dantzler stressed, though, that OTC's effectiveness should only be viewed as a stopgap while a permanent solution continues to be developed. According to the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS), OTC trunk injection is expected to increase a citrus grower's cost of production by 7%.

There was also much buzz about new funding for the Citrus Research and Field Trial (CRAFT) Foundation. The Florida Legislature allocated more than \$100 million for CRAFT programs this year.

Steven Hall, CRAFT executive director, also spoke during the Expo. He said interest has been high in the programs, which provide incentives for new plantings and help fund therapies in existing groves. The application deadline for the current cycle of funding is Oct. 3. Applications can be found at www.craftfdn.org.

Other citrus seminars focused on production strategies for HLB-affected trees. Ute Albrecht, UF/IFAS associate professor of plant physiology, presented best practices for OTC application. She advised growers to acidify OTC solutions correctly (pH 2) and to apply them promptly, so they do not lose efficacy. The solution should be yellow, not brown or red.

Albrecht added that yield is not affected by OTC application month, but juice quality is. Higher OTC rates usually perform better, but both commercially available OTC formulations showed the same efficacy in her trials. She recommended combining OTC injection with other practices, like individual protective covers.

John Chater, UF/IFAS assistant professor of horticultural sciences, spoke about OTC effects on specific varieties and rootstocks. He reported that OTC can improve ratio and pounds solids of OLL sweet oranges and can help fruit loads pass market testing.

Proper irrigation and fertilization continues to be the cornerstone of citrus production and helping trees remain productive. Davie Kadyampakeni, UF/IFAS associate professor of citrus water and nutrient management, detailed the five Rs of citrus production in the era of HLB:

1. **Right water management** – Use of soil moisture sensors and daily irrigation is encouraged. But in the case of ½ inch or greater rainfall, avoid irrigation for two days.
2. **Right nutrient rate** – Apply nitrogen at 180 to 200 pounds per acre.
3. **Right fertilizer placement** – Place fertilizer in the irrigated zone or where the microjet wetting pattern is.
4. **Right fertilizer source** – Improved fertilizer blends resulted in better root growth efficiency and higher fruit yields.
5. **Right timing** – Annual application rates: Slow-release or controlled-release fertilizer two to three times, conventional granular fertilizer in four splits, and foliar fertilizer three to four times.

PowerPoints of most of the citrus seminars are available [at](http://www.crec.ifas.ufl.edu/citrus-research/presentations/citrus-and-specialty-crop-expo/):

www.crec.ifas.ufl.edu/citrus-research/presentations/citrus-and-specialty-crop-expo/.

Fruit Drop in HLB Citrus

By Tripti Vashisth

Fruit drop has become one of the biggest challenges for Florida citrus growers, especially in groves hit hard by HLB. On top of the disease, recent hurricanes like Ian and Milton have made the problem worse, causing fruit to drop not just during the storm but often weeks later. Other stresses — such as drought, flooding or cold snaps — can also speed up fruit loss and tree decline.

Plant growth regulators (PGRs) can be used as tools to help growers keep more fruit on trees. Two products in particular are showing results: gibberellic acid (GA, ProGibb LV Plus by Valent BioSciences) and 2,4-D (Citrus Fix by AMVAC). GA helps keep the peel and canopy healthier for longer. 2,4-D works directly to slow the fruit's natural "drop signal." Both also push back against ethylene, the plant hormone that drives premature drop in HLB trees.

A two-year field trial on mature Valencia in Polk County tested different approaches:

- ☐ An untreated control
- ☐ A single November spray of 2,4-D at the label rate
- ☐ Three smaller sprays at 1 ounce per acre spread out September through November
- ☐ A tank mix of 2,4-D (3.2 ounces per acre) plus GA (10 ounces per acre)

The results were clear. The GA + 2,4-D combination cut fruit drop by about 16% in the first year. In the second year - despite Hurricane Milton - trees treated with either 2,4-D alone or the GA + 2,4-D mix lost at least 20% less fruit than untreated trees. Treated trees also produced more fruit per canopy size, showing better efficiency even under storm stress. Multiple small sprays of 2,4-D did not provide any extra benefit in reducing fruit drop.

The takeaway message for growers is that one well-timed November spray of 2,4-D along GA works very well in reducing fruit drop. Using these PGRs, especially after hurricanes, can help reduce drop and protect yields in HLB-affected citrus.

Tripti Vashisth is associate center director and associate professor at the UF/IFAS CREC in Lake Alfred



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For information about Quail Creek Sporting Ranch, go to: QuailCreekSportingRanch.com.

Ag-Venture 2025

Ag-Venture will take place this year **November 4th - 6th** at the Highlands County Fairgrounds. The organization's goal is preserving the Agriculture way of life in Highlands County by sharing that mission with future generations. Volunteers to assist with putting on the educational programs at the 14 Ag-venture stations are always needed. You will find that it will be just as rewarding for you as it is for the Highlands County 3rd graders that go through the program.

The program has undergone a few changes in the past month or so:

- A new Program Coordinator, Sarah Mayworth, joined the program on August 1, 2025. With a degree in Agricultural Education & Communication from the University of Florida, Sarah brings over 7 years of experience in an agriculture classroom setting. She has a passion of sharing the Agriculture industry with our future generations and is excited for this new role. As Program Coordinator, Sarah will be overseeing program implementation, working closely with our donors and volunteers, and helping to ensure the impact of your support is both meaningful and measurable.
- There is a revamped board of directors: Louis Canevari, Lisa Collins, Danielle Daum, Laine Daum, Tammy Hancock, Olivia Helms, Bret Hinkle, Sharon Keiber, Sarah Beth Murphy, Kayla Nickerson, Morgan Norris, Darlene Phypers and Gabe Smoak.
- The Board has decided to not have the steak dinner this year, but is looking forward to continuing to partner with the community volunteers to successfully put on our 2025 Ag-Venture program.

So if you are interested in getting involved with Ag-Venture through becoming a donor or volunteer, contact Sarah Mayworth at either 352-214-9883 or hcagventure@outlook.com.

Also, if you are interested in helping us in the citrus station one or two mornings (11/2 - 11/4) from 8:30 till noon – you can also contact Ray directly.



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Water Use Under Individual Protective Covers

By Fernando Alferez and Osbaldo Vasquez

During the last seven years, the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) Southwest Florida Research and Education Center (SWFREC) in Immokalee has been performing comprehensive studies on the use of individual protective covers (IPCs).

This tool is now adopted by most growers planting new citrus trees in Florida both in solid sets and resets in mature declining groves.

In an initial trial that spanned for 30 months with Valencia scion grafted on Cleopatra rootstock (Gaire et al., 2021), trees were covered with small 4-foot IPCs for 18 months. Then, to allow more canopy growth, the covers were substituted for larger 7-foot IPCs that were maintained for 12 more months.

Measuring VPD

Vapor pressure deficit (VPD) was monitored during these 30 months with dataloggers. VPD is a measure of how dry the air is, indicating the difference between the actual amount of water vapor in the air and the maximum amount it could hold at a given temperature. A higher VPD means the air is drier and more likely to draw moisture from plant leaves and soil, contributing to water stress conditions. A lower VPD, on the contrary, allows stomata to be open for a longer time, as conditions are not conducive to plant dehydration.

See WATER on page 22



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WATER, Con't. from page 21

During the 30 months of the study, the VPD ranged from 0.32 kilopascals (kPa) to 0.79 kPa for trees with IPCs and from 0.30 kPa to 1.4 kPa for trees without IPCs. In other words, trees covered with IPCs had a significantly lower VPD compared to non-covered trees during most months between June 2018 and August 2019 and during May to July 2020.

In other studies, a reduction in VPD, air temperature, evapotranspiration and higher humidity was reported when using other plant covers. Under these conditions, higher photosynthetic rate, stomatal conductance, CO₂ assimilation and water-use efficiency were also reported. These conditions generally promote tree growth, which is what was observed in the study. Trees showed larger canopies and were taller than non-protected trees. However, this was observed only during the end of the experiment. Consistent with this, the largest differences in VPD were observed also during the last two months of the experiment. This fact caught the researchers' attention.

They hypothesized that when tree canopies are smaller and there is more free space inside the IPCs, VPD tends to be similar to that in the surrounding atmosphere. As the tree grows and occupies the space inside the IPC, VPD lowers as the air is more humid than in the surrounding atmosphere.

In three instances, significant variation in VPD was seen:

1. At IPC installation. Interestingly, here VPD was higher in covered trees for a couple of months. This may be attributed to the planting and manipulation stress. After that period, VPD in covered trees was consistently and significantly lower than in non-covered trees.
2. At IPC replacement. Here, as there is new empty space still to be filled with tree biomass, internal VPD is equal to external VPD until spring flush starts.
3. Once spring flush ceases and a bigger canopy is established, VPD inside the IPCs again is significantly lower than in the outside surrounding atmosphere. All data was collected with dataloggers installed in bottom zip-tied IPCs.

Zip-Tied Vs. Open Bottom IPCs

Many growers are not zip-tying the bags; they leave the bottoms open. This has advantages as installation of the IPCs is less labor intense and faster, and a loose bottom may allow some beneficials to enter the canopy and reduce some secondary pests. However, the impact of this practice on the environmental conditions inside the bag and its effect on tree growth has not been studied in detail. Zip-tying or not may have some implications not only on tree growth but also on irrigation frequency and water-use efficiency.

To address these questions, UF/IFAS is conducting several trials. In the first trial on Valencia trees grafted on US-942, VPD was indeed significantly different when comparing zip-tied to open-bottom IPCs. The fact that VPD in open-bottom IPCs is comparable to open-field conditions, more variable and higher than in zip-tied IPCs is of concern, as one of the advantages of IPC use may be lost at least in the first year or so.

Tree growth is currently being monitored in both IPC conditions to determine any effects on tree growth in the long run. Additionally, researchers are interested in knowing if water use will be different (i.e., if more frequent irrigation will be necessary in open-bottom IPC trees to achieve the same growth as in zip-tied IPC trees). This may have significant consequences on water regimes adopted in groves to achieve the best results on tree development and on tree water usage.

Fernando Alferez is an associate professor, and Osbaldo Vasquez is a biological scientist, both at the UF/IFAS SWFREC in Immokalee.

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- **Nordox® 75 WG or 30/30** - copper fungicide, OMRI Listed
- **TresOil®** - emulsified fungicide/insecticide spray oil, OMRI Listed

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