



Citrus connection



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

Over summer, concerns were voiced about whether we would have enough growers confident enough in the future of our industry to utilize funds allocated from this year's CRAFT program. However, hearing the news of exceeding the allocated funding is a breath of fresh air and brings much-needed optimism. It's a moment we should all be proud of, showing that our industry is still fighting—even at the bottom of the ninth with two outs.

The alleviation of financial burdens is a blessing; now we must back that money with even better efforts to obtain productive results and positive performance markers that ultimately prove the groves of the citrus industry will flow cash in the future. Once we have the definitive date to demonstrate groves' finance ability, the question becomes: If you're not resetting your groves, are you really in the citrus business? This question has echoed through generations in the industry, and in the past decade, it's become increasingly common to see groves with up to 50% or more of open spaces. It's a tough hole to climb out of, but with the help of the latest CRAFT initiatives, it's more feasible than ever!

Throughout September, I had numerous conversations with individuals voicing concern if there would be enough participation from growers across the state to fulfill what Ben Albritton advocated for. I am thrilled to say, more applications were filed than funds allocated for – I'd say that's a good problem to have!

It's now up to the CRAFT Advisory Board to decide if they will adjust the amount of payment per tree or provide funds for only a portion of the applications. While this could disrupt some growers' financial plans, it's still a great outcome for our industry from top to bottom, providing benefits to nurseries, growers, and processors in the coming years. We will all be anxiously waiting while the CRAFT advisors take on the huge task of processing the 2,000 applications.

Outside of the CRAFT program, many growers are cautiously optimistic about our crop of Earlies. Even having faced a bad canker year following hurricane Milton, conversations are pointing towards better size, increased quality, and less stem die back. Some growers are already reporting fruit tests with above ten brix! It's still early, but these small positive markers just give me more confidence that our trees are on the right track going in November and our Valencia season.

Once again, I would like to thank Ben Albritton, Florida Citrus Mutual, and the CRAFT program for *everything* they are working on and ultimately fighting for our industry. Without them, Florida citrus wouldn't have as bright of a future. On behalf of the board, I would also like to extend my thanks to Ray Royce for his pivotal role in ensuring that the Highlands County Grower's Association continues to serve our members.

Riley McKenna

Sept. 2025

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- BMP Cost Share
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- Syngenta Internships



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STAFF

Ray Royce, Executive Director
Dayanara Lopez, Admin. Assistant

2025 Calendar of Events

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

I know that we will all keep Jan Menges' family and friends in our thoughts and prayers. For a number of years, Jan played a significant role in helping shape HCCGA into what we have grown to be and she will be missed both on a professional, and more importantly, personal level. She was a colleague and friend that I was truly honored to have.



On a somewhat related note – please join me in welcoming Dayanara “Day” Lopez to the HCCGA family as our new administrative assistant. In her first couple of weeks with us, Day has proven to be a very bright and capable young lady that I believe will help our Association to continue grow in its mission of assisting and promoting our membership. So if you stop by the office, or interact with her over the phone or via e-mail, please welcome Day to the organization.

The \$100 million of CRAFT funding, made possible by Senator Albritton, his Florida legislature colleagues and Governor DeSantis, will all be put to great use as Florida's citrus growers have overwhelming submitted applications seeking to put millions of new trees in the ground over the next several years.

Thank you to the CRAFT staff, Florida Citrus Mutual and many others for helping create this opportunity, and for your service to our industry.

The level of investment committed in this public/private CRAFT project partnership is certainly exciting to see as the grower community seeks to further reimagine and rebuild the Florida citrus industry. A significant portion of that tree replanting will take place right here in Highlands County, so good luck to those of you that are investing in our industry long term.

Registration is actively ongoing for the **2025 HCCGA Citrus Fun Shoot**, so make your plans now to join us on **Saturday, December 6th** at **Quail Creek Sporting Ranch**. Check out the shoot registration flier in this newsletter, and get your shooting teams organized early in order to join us for a great day of outdoor camaraderie, a plethora of prizes & accoutrements and a fabulous Prime Rib & Seafood lunch.

To close, I want to say thank you for the opportunity to have worked on behalf of the wonderful men and women of this organization for the past two decades plus. October 17th will be my 24th anniversary as HCCGA Executive Director, and I feel very privileged to have played a small role in our collective success. I don't know if it is a good or bad sign that I have been in this position for that period of time. My three predecessors served for a combined 11 years before I was brought on board in 2001, and those three set us on the path to fulfilling our mission statement of **“protecting and enhancing the viability and profitability of commercial citrus groves in Highlands County.”** I have been honored to carry on the Association's good work since.

Actually, I have been involved with the Association since its inception in 1990 when our family's citrus operation joined the new group as it was being formed. I was elected to the HCCGA Board of Directors in the early spring of 1993 and became the Association's fifth Board President a year later in 1994 serving two terms in that capacity. So you can see that this organization is very special to me, and I thank you all for your faith in my leadership!

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. ***And remember, 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



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.



Dayanara Lopez

New HCCGA Admin

Hello,

I'd like to introduce myself—my name is Dayanara, and I'm excited to join the Highlands County Citrus Growers Association as the new administrative assistant. It's an honor to be part of such a dedicated organization, and I'm looking forward to support the incredible work the association does for our community.

I grew up in a small agricultural town in Pennsylvania, where I developed a deep appreciation for the hard work, resilience, and passion that define local farming and agricultural communities. With a background in business administration, I'm eager to use my skills to support our members and contribute meaningfully to HCCGA's mission.

I look forward to getting to know each of you and working together to support our agricultural community.

Warm Regards,
Dayanara Lopez
HCCGA Administrative Assistant



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

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Fall Insect and Mite Management

Lauren Diepenbrock

Unlike northern regions, fall in Florida is not generally a time when insect, mite and other invertebrate pest populations decline rapidly. In Florida citrus, we generally see the opposite of this trend. In the hot, dry end of summer and early fall, mite populations often soar, requiring management to prevent excessive damage to fruit. (*See The Florida Citrus Production Guide chapter on Mites for management recommendations.*)



In most years, groves will experience a fall flush, which continues to support Asian citrus psyllids (ACP) and citrus leafminer (CLM) populations. These generally will require simultaneous management; growers can opt for a chemistry with efficacy on both targets by using recommendations for both ACP and CLM from the production guide. Note that all tables include both the list of recommended products by target organism and the other organisms that they are known to control in the far-right column of both tables for each chemistry.

Lebbeck mealybug populations generally see a resurgence during the fall as the temperature and humidity during this period fall into the optimal range for reproduction and juvenile survival. In a 2024 **Tip of the Week** story, we described the annual population structure of lebbeck mealybug, with the juvenile (crawlers and immatures) surging through October.

Hurricane season further complicates the management of this species. Juveniles can often be dislodged by heavy rain and wind events; in fact, it takes only 5 mph winds to dislodge crawlers from a plant's leaves. This means that hurricanes and similar wind events can serve to spread juveniles throughout a grove and/or between groves. With this in mind, if your grove has had a history of lebbeck mealybug infestations, planning a post-storm management spray can help in knocking back the population.

Populations of most of our pest challenges generally decline in late fall going into the winter, reducing the need for most management actions. However, there is merit in considering a dormant season spray during the winter as research has shown that it can reduce the ACP population in advance of the spring flush.

Courtesy of AgNet Media



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.

In Memoriam

Our friend, and former HCCGA administrative assistant, Jan Menges passed away on Friday, October 3rd at the age of 83 after a brief hospitalization. Jan had proudly served our Association so very well for over 15 years during her two stints as HCCGA administrative assistant.

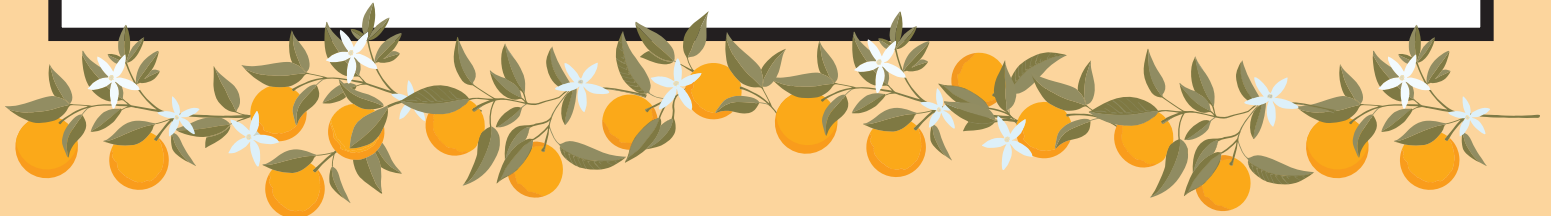
Prior to working with us she spent some time at Maxwell Groves after moving to Highlands County from Texas to assist her elderly mother. Jan then was employed for six years (1994-2000) at Sebring Packing as a key member of their office staff before retiring for the first time when they ceased operations.

In 2003 we asked her to come out of retirement to become administrative assistant for our Association. She served in that capacity until 2016, providing tremendous service to our Association for those 13 years before retiring "to enjoy her home, friends and craft projects" at the age of 74.

However, she had so truly enjoyed her role with the Association, and interacting with our members, that she came out of retirement for the second time at the age of 81 in February of 2023 when asked if she would be might willing to help us out again for a brief time. That "brief" period of assistance ended up lasting over 2.5 years. She had only retired from service to our Association, due to some medical challenges that precluded her from coming into the office, less than 3 weeks prior to her passing.

Per Jan's very detailed wishes – there will not be any funeral or memorial services. There will be a private burial in Avon Park.

We will all certainly miss Jan's good nature, warm smile and friendship. Our thoughts and prayers are with her family and friends.



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CUPS Performance Continues to Shine

Citrus under protective screen (CUPS) performance in Florida got a big thumbs up from researcher Arnold Schumann in a virtual presentation on Aug. 7th. Dr. Schumann, a UF/IFAS professor, reported on findings from his long term research at the Citrus Research and Education Center (CREC) as well as commercial CUPS projects in Florida.

Schumann's summary of CUPS performance included the following points:

- At approximately 360 trees per acre, CUPS planting densities are higher than in conventional groves.
- Yield, fruit size and packout are primary contributors of high net revenue while rind defects significantly impacted marketability.
- CUPS prevents HLB, canker and hurricane damage to citrus.
- CUPS is a profitable method for growing citrus for the fresh market.
- CUPS fruit quality is similar to pre-HLB Florida fruit.
- CUPS trees produce earlier and higher yields than conventional citrus groves.
- CUPS saves input resources and costs by growing trees faster.
- The internal rate of return for CREC CUPS is estimated at 9% to 16% over 10 years.
- HLB incidence in the CREC CUPS was less than 2% after 10 years.

Schumann reported that the per-acre cost of building a CUPS structure is less when it is a larger, more square-shaped facility rather than a smaller, rectangular structure. He described 10 acres as the sweet spot for a CUPS facility size based on construction costs. For example - a single 38-acre structure has a construction cost of \$35,297 per acre, while four square CUPS of 9.5 acres each cost \$36,841 per acre.

While that information would seem to favor building one large structure, Schumann added: "There are cost-benefit factors to consider. The slightly more expensive four individual CUPS can be better managed for pests and diseases, storm damage can be isolated, pest invasion quarantined, and cross-pollination prevented."

Schumann also reported that a January 2022 commercial harvest of the CREC CUPS' Ray Ruby grapefruit yielded a 98% packout. Net return per field box in that harvest was \$24. Schumann added that 85.5% of the Ruby Red fruit was in the desirable 40/36/32/27 size classes. Over 10 years, the CREC CUPS Ruby Reds produced 9,308 boxes per acre, he added.

While Schumann's presentation focused on grapefruit, he noted that other varieties are also grown in CUPS. This includes Valencia, Murcott, Dancy, Early Pride, Temple, Mineola and Sugar Belle. He said that the yields of Valencias — the most prevalent citrus in Florida — are not expected to reach those of grapefruit. However, he pointed out that Valencia is a versatile variety producing high-quality juice and fresh fruit.

Courtesy of AgNet Media



CRAFT Update

by Steven Hall, CRAFT Executive Director



The Citrus Research and Field Trials (CRAFT) Foundation's Year 7 application closed on October 3, 2025. On behalf of the CRAFT Board of Directors and staff, we thank the Florida Legislature and the leadership of Governor Ron DeSantis, Senate President Ben Albritton and Commissioner Wilton Simpson for the \$100 million in funding CRAFT received for this year's programs.

CRAFT will use part of this funding to assist growers in planting more than 300,000 trees through our Fast Track program by the end of the 2025 calendar year!

CRAFT has been thrilled with the industry's response to our program offerings and we are excited about the future of the citrus industry that we are planting together! The total amount of applications CRAFT has received far exceeds our available funding.

Over the next few weeks, CRAFT will confirm project designs and eligibility. The CRAFT Board will also meet to determine final funding priorities, using our available funds to meet the demand for the Year 7 Programs. We will communicate these decisions and other updates to the applicants over the next few weeks. Please watch your email for the latest information directly from CRAFT.

Also, please remember that applicants with an existing CRAFT Grower Participation Agreement (New Planting Cycles 1 to 6 or ETT Rounds 1 to 3) **must be current with all data submission requirements related to their existing CRAFT projects for their applications to be eligible for consideration.** Please continue to submit any outstanding data as quickly as possible.

It was great to see so many of you in person at the Grower Outreach events hosted by Florida Citrus Mutual last month. On behalf of the CRAFT Board of Directors and staff, I want to say thank you to all of the growers who have applied to participate in this year's programs. I also want to extend a special thank you to Carisa Keller and Tina Buice for their tireless dedication. They have spent countless hours talking with growers, reviewing applications and answering questions. Thank you for all you do for CRAFT and the citrus industry!

Please contact Executive Director Steven Hall by email at Steven@craftfdn.org or by phone 863-333-2931, Assistant Program Manager Tina Buice by email at Tina@craftfdn.org, or Scientific Coordinator Carisa Keller by email at Carisa@craftfdn.org if you have any questions.

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Citrus Fun Shoot at 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.

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.

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>.

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.

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 is providing cold beer refreshments after shooting is completed again this year*).

*At this time we have two **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**!

2025 Citrus Field Days & Variety Displays

UF/IFAS and the citrus breeding teams have set 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 Day

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

Date: November 19, 2025 @ 8:30 AM

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

Pre-registration is requested.

<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.

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.

FDACS Block Grant Website

Florida Agriculture Commissioner Wilton Simpson has announced the launch of an online hub (www.fdacs.gov/blockgrant) - a dedicated webpage for updates, eligibility criteria and application instructions for the USDA's recently announced Hurricane Block Grant Disaster Program. This is where you will find updates, information and instructions.

"Florida's agriculture industry was hit hard by back-to-back hurricane seasons, and our producers need long-term, meaningful support to recover," Simpson said in a statement. "This website will serve as the go-to resource for Florida's farmers, ranchers, and growers as we develop the program and ultimately launch the application process for more than \$600 million in disaster relief funding."

Florida is the first state in the nation to finalize an agreement with the USDA to implement the recently authorized block grant funding for agricultural producers. USDA Secretary Brooke Rollins announced in July that her agency had signed the \$675 million block grant agreement with FDACS in order to provide Florida farmers aid following devastating agricultural losses caused by hurricanes in 2023 and 2024.

FDACS is currently developing a federally required work plan that will outline eligibility rules, documentation standards and application procedures for producers seeking block grant funds. Once completed, the plan will be submitted to the federal government for approval, after which Simpson's agency anticipates opening the process. The timeline for the block grant funding includes, in order:

- An agreement executed with the USDA.
- FDACS develops a work plan.
- FDACS submits the work plan to the USDA for approval.
- The USDA approves the work plan.
- FDACS announces an application process for the block grants for impacted producers.



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Florida Citrus Commission Exercises Rights to Varieties

The Florida Citrus Commission (FCC) on Sept. 17 approved a Florida Department of Citrus (FDOC) request to exercise the right to eight new varieties from the *Florida Foundation Seed Producers* (FFSP). The FCC, which governs the FDOC, will retain exclusive rights to the varieties for eight years. The varieties are recognized for attributes beneficial to the Florida citrus industry.

The New Varieties Development and Management Corporation (NVDMC) will be the designee for licensing the varieties. The FDOC will work with the FFSP and NVDMC to help propagate the commercialization, sale and marketability of these varieties:

- **KW-5-7 (tangerine)** – Reasonable level of HLB tolerance; greater alternaria resistance and lower seed count compared to Dancy tangerine
- **18A-10-47 (tangor)** – Near seedless, even under cross pollination; HLB-susceptible but performs well under citrus under protective screen for the fresh market; improvement compared to the Honey Murcott variety
- **N40-16-7-11 (Valencia)** – High level of HLB tolerance, noted for 34 years of survival and continued productivity in the field; quality is similar to traditional Valencia fruit
- **C7-12-18 (mandarin hybrid)** – Early seedless and easy peeling, maturing mid-season; notable good color, Brix and flavor, making it a favorable candidate for the fresh market or to be blended with not-from-concentrate (NFC) juice
- **C4-14-51 (mandarin hybrid)** – Seedless tangelo with excellent HLB tolerance; potential for fresh market or to be blended with NFC juice
- **KE-9-9 (mandarin hybrid)** – Nearly seedless and easy peeling, maturing early season; notable good color, Brix and flavor, making it a favorable candidate for the fresh market or to be blended with NFC juice
- **STR-4-1 (rootstock)** – New diploid rootstock derived from a mutation of X639; noted for its HLB tolerance
- **N40-16-11-7 (grapefruit)** – Noted for its greater tree growth, health and yield in HLB-endemic regions compared to Star Ruby and Ray Ruby



Source: Florida Department of Citrus



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2026 Florida Citrus Hall of Fame Inductees

The Florida Citrus Hall of Fame Selection Committee has announced the inductees for the Class of 2026, including Brenda Eubanks Burnette, Kristen Carlson, James “Doc” Redd (deceased), and Dr. L.W. Timmer. The four distinguished leaders will be inducted into the Hall of Fame on March 27, 2026 at the George W. Jenkins Fieldhouse at Florida Southern College in Lakeland.



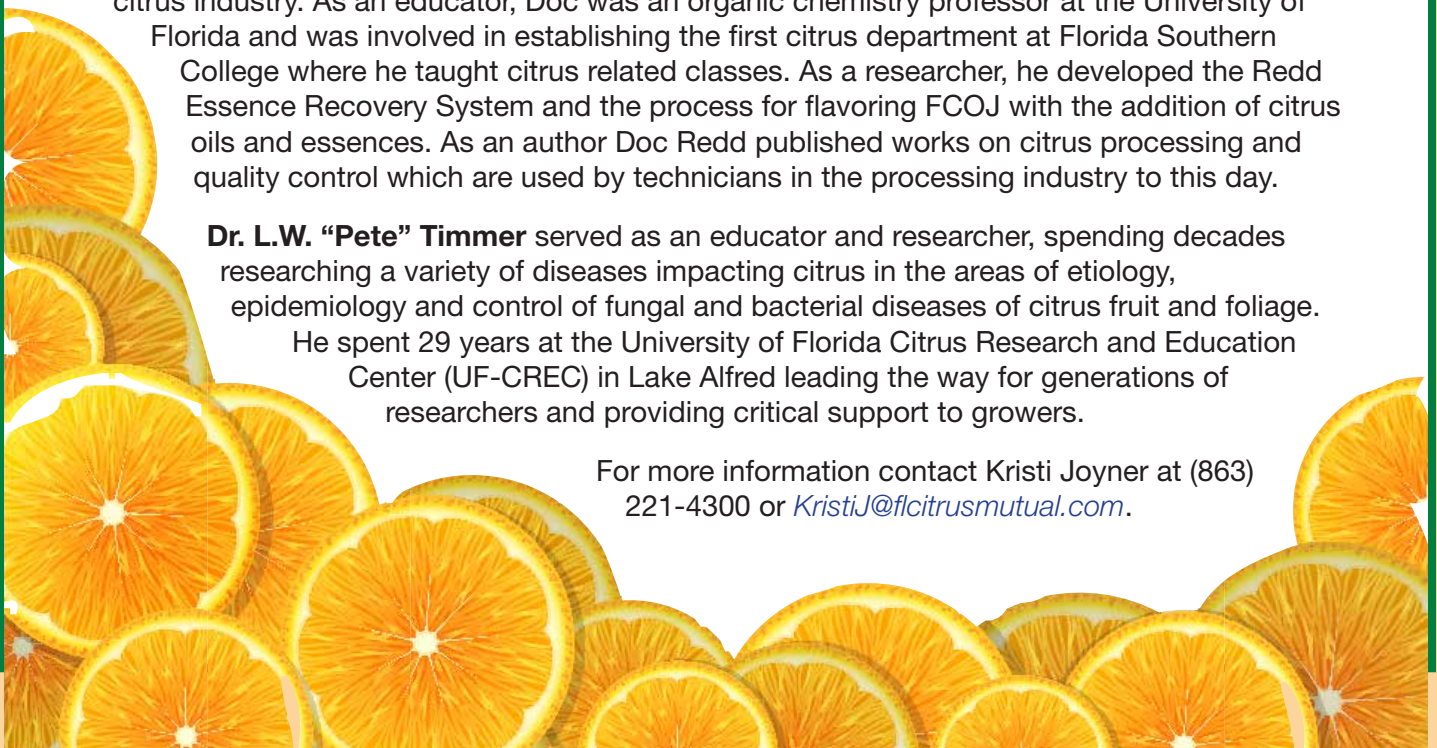
Brenda Eubanks Burnette is being honored for her decades of service in the field of marketing, promotion and historical preservation of the industry. Brenda’s involvement with the Florida citrus industry began when she was crowned Miss Florida Citrus in 1981. When her reign ended, she went on to serve as spokesperson for the Department of Citrus before moving into her role as the Executive Director of the Florida Citrus Showcase. Following her retirement, Brenda has continued to dedicate her time to volunteer roles with the Miss Florida Citrus Scholarship program, the Florida Citrus Hall of Fame, publications and fundraising.

Kristen Carlson has served Florida citrus for more than four decades providing both legal expertise and leadership in all areas of the industry. Kristen has served as general counsel for the Florida Department of Citrus, the executive director of the Florida Citrus Processors Association and the original executive director of the Citrus Research and Field Trial (CRAFT) program, taking the groundbreaking and industry-revitalizing program from conception to implementation.

James “Doc” Redd served as an educator, researcher and author for the benefit of the Florida citrus industry. As an educator, Doc was an organic chemistry professor at the University of Florida and was involved in establishing the first citrus department at Florida Southern College where he taught citrus related classes. As a researcher, he developed the Redd Essence Recovery System and the process for flavoring FCOJ with the addition of citrus oils and essences. As an author Doc Redd published works on citrus processing and quality control which are used by technicians in the processing industry to this day.

Dr. L.W. “Pete” Timmer served as an educator and researcher, spending decades researching a variety of diseases impacting citrus in the areas of etiology, epidemiology and control of fungal and bacterial diseases of citrus fruit and foliage. He spent 29 years at the University of Florida Citrus Research and Education Center (UF-CREC) in Lake Alfred leading the way for generations of researchers and providing critical support to growers.

For more information contact Kristi Joyner at (863) 221-4300 or KristiJ@flcitrusmutual.com.



Installing and Using Soil Moisture Sensors

by Sandra M. Guzmán and Amir Rezazadeh

During Florida's rainy and hurricane season, accurate water management becomes even more critical for citrus growers. Soil moisture sensors (SMSs) can be used as a baseline tool for making informed irrigation decisions. But to get reliable readings, it is critical to choose, install and use them correctly.

Where To Install

Proper SMS placement is essential. Choose a spot representing average soil and irrigation conditions, ideally as close to the tree root zone as possible but outside areas with rocks, or at the beginning/end of the irrigation line. For drip irrigation, install the sensor near the wet area of the dripper. For microsprinkler systems, locate a spot that's consistently wet but not right next to the microsprinkler.

Calibrate For Local Conditions

While most SMSs come pre-calibrated, field calibration can improve accuracy, especially in Florida's variable sandy soils. Installing a sensor when the soil has become saturated following a rain event is beneficial. Tracking the readings over a week after installation will allow the identification of high water-availability thresholds. Soil samples for gravimetric measurement can help verify sensor data as well. Contact UF/IFAS Extension or your sensor manufacturer for necessary calibration support.

Avoid Installation Pitfalls

Objects such as rocks, large roots and air gaps inside the sensor's "sensing volume" can disrupt the sensor's electrical flow. Always check and prepare the site before installation to ensure enough soil coverage around the sensor. For wired telemetry units, plan cable routes and bury cables to avoid damage from farming equipment or animals.

Make The Most Of Real-Time Data

Modern SMS systems can transmit data to your phone or computer, making it easy to adjust field management in response to storms or changing weather. Regularly reviewing sensor readings, graphical soil moisture trends and weather data makes it possible to track the water status of the field.

Water movement across the soil can be identified using two or more soil moisture sensors, such as when probes are installed (one at 3 to 7 inches and another at 8 to 16 inches deep). The top sensor tracks moisture where most roots absorb water and is the best indicator for daily irrigation needs. The bottom sensor monitors deeper soil moisture, helping to see if water, after irrigation or rain, is moving too far down where roots can't reach it. These lower sensor trends can indicate water table elevation during the rainy season.

Growers may effectively manage water during Florida's rainy season by using site-specific information from the thoughtful selection and installation of soil moisture sensors. Modern systems can integrate projected water requirements, rainfall and other meteorological data.

For further information or practical help managing sensors and data, contact you local UF/IFAS citrus agent (*Alissa Hevesh in Highlands County 863-402-6540 or ahevesh@ufl.edu.*)

*Sandra M. Guzmán is an assistant professor at the UF/IFAS IRREC in Fort Pierce.
Amir Rezazadeh is the fruit and alternative crops UF/IFAS Extension agent in St. Lucie County.*

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.

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U.S. Farm Security Plan Announced

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins recently announced the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Farm Security Action Plan. The plan elevates American agriculture as a key element of national security. "We'll never let foreign adversaries control our land, our labs or our livelihoods," Rollins said.

The USDA reported that the U.S. Department of Justice recently charged foreign nationals, including a Chinese Communist Party member, with smuggling a noxious fungus into the United States. It declared the fungus a potential agro-terrorism weapon responsible for billions in global crop losses.

The USDA stated that the action highlighted a trend of America's enemies infiltrating U.S. research, buying up U.S. farmland, stealing U.S. technology and launching cyberattacks on U.S. food systems. "These actions expose strategic vulnerabilities in America's food and agriculture supply chain," USDA stated.

According to USDA, the National Farm Security Action Plan safeguards the U.S. food supply, strengthens critical infrastructure and defends U.S. agricultural innovation from foreign adversaries. USDA stated that the plan takes aggressive action across seven areas:

- 1) **Secure and Protect American Farmland** – Address U.S. foreign farmland ownership from adversaries head on with total transparency and tougher penalties.
- 2) **Enhance Agricultural Supply Chain Resilience**– Refocus domestic investment into key manufacturing sectors and identify non-adversarial partners to work with when domestic production is not available. Plan for contingencies.
- 3) **Protect U.S. Nutrition Safety Net From Fraud and Foreign Exploitation** – USDA stated that billions have been stolen by foreign crime rings, adding, "That ends now."
- 4) **Defend Agricultural Research and Innovation** – "No more sweetheart deals or secret pacts with hostile nations," USDA stated. "American ideas stay in America."
- 5) **Put America First in Every USDA Program**– From farm loans to food safety, every program will reflect the America First agenda.
- 6) **Safeguard Plant and Animal Health** – Crack down on bio-threats before they reach U.S. soil.
- 7) **Protect Critical Infrastructure**– Farms, food and supply chains are national security assets and will be treated as such.

The National Farm Security Action Plan will serve as the launch point for USDA to work in unison with governors, state legislators and federal partners to further integrate agriculture into broader national security efforts. The executive summary of the plan is available at: www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/nat-sec-executive-summary.pdf.

"Foreign ownership of land near strategic bases and U.S. military installations poses a serious threat to our national security," said Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth. "The Farm Security Plan will put America first and keep our bases across the homeland secure." "Farm security is national security," added Attorney General Pam Bondi. "The Department of Justice will continue working to prosecute those who threaten American agriculture, investigate cases of potential agro-terrorism and protect America's farmers from illegal threats at home and abroad."

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For additional information, contact Ray at the HCCGA office at 863-385-8091 or admin@hccga.com.

Mail or E-mail form to: HCCGA, 6419 U.S. Hwy. 27 S., Sebring, FL 33876; E-Mail: admin@hccga.com.

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Ag-Venture 2025

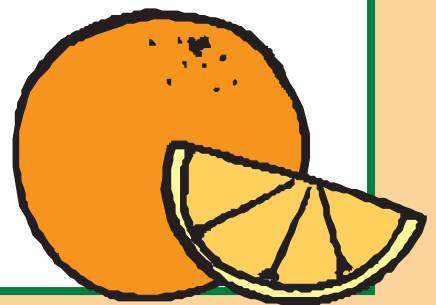
Ag-Venture will take place this year **November 4th - 6th** at the Highlands County Fairgrounds. The organization's goal is preserving the Agriculture way of life in Highlands County by sharing that mission with future generations. Volunteers to assist with putting on the educational programs at the 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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Syngenta Citrus Internships - Summer 2026

Company Overview

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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.

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- Soil sampling support (fungicides)
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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
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