



# Citrus connection



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

### THE POWER OF COMMUNICATION IN CHALLENGING TIMES

*Why now is the moment to strengthen how we talk-and listen-across the industry*

Communication has always mattered in agriculture... but today, it's absolutely critical. With the pressures of time, disease, and limited resources bearing down on our industry, the way we communicate could be one of our greatest tools in creating a stronger, more resilient future. I'm not talking about having good manners or staying in touch. It's about building connections that are clear, open, and effective, ultimately leading to smarter decisions, faster action, and better outcomes for everyone involved in the food and farming ecosystems.

We need strong communication at every level:

- **Grower to grower** - let's avoid duplicating efforts, share our hardships or lessons learned, and work together to identify new opportunities.
- **Grower to researcher** - to ensure that research is grounded in the real-world challenges we face in the field, and ultimately being implemented and tested that way.
- **Grower to allied industries** - aligning industries can help the agricultural industry learn about and obtain the technological advancements in tools and treatments.
- **Grower to processors and packers** - let's ensure nothing is lost in translation between the grove and the consumer.
- **Grower to lawmakers** - to help policy reflect the practical realities of agricultural challenges and help protect our industry, and the green spaces it provides.

- **International communication** - Florida has been the leader in all things citrus. However, in recent years we've had to focus on surviving, making it tough to improve crucial horticultural practices. We need to engage with any international growers willing to talk to us, as well as researchers alike.

We all know time is of the essence. The faster and more effectively we communicate what's working and what's not, the more agile and efficient our responses can be. Open dialogue fosters innovation, reduces waste, and accelerates the impact of new ideas!

Fortunately, we're at a pivotal point. With new researchers coming on board at the UF/IFAS CTC and fresh relationships forming across the sector, now is the time to invest in communication-not just as a courtesy, but as a strategy. This is our chance to build lasting, trusted connections that help us adapt, survive, and thrive as an industry.

Let's not miss this opportunity. Let's reach out, speak up, and most important-listen well, because stronger communication today means a stronger industry tomorrow.

*Riley McKenna*

## APR 2025

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- Citrus EXPO
- CRAFT Update
- Citrus Commission App'ts.
- Hall of Fame Inductees
- Highlands County OJ Month
- IPCs
- HCCGA Golf Day
- Results with PGRs
- USDA Forecast
- 2025 Hurricanes



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## 2025 Calendar of Events

**June 10**

Landowner Expo @ Bert Harris Center - Sebring

**June 11-13**

Annual Citrus Conference @ Coconut Point Hyatt - Bonita Springs

**August 20-21**

Citrus & Specialty Crop Expo @ FL. State Fairgrounds - Tampa

**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

The Association is assisting the CRAFT program with some of their site verification visits. This has provided me the opportunity to visit groves in a variety of locations across 5 counties so far, and I have seen millions of new trees (*some in CRAFT projects and others not*) in the ground.

I come away very encouraged by the job that the growers involved with putting these new trees in the ground are doing with them. It seems that a variety of different young tree production regimes are working for folks. I have also enjoyed, and learned from, visiting with growers about their hopes and plans for the future of our industry.



I share this because it is very likely that there will be a new cycle of CRAFT funding available for later this summer – hopefully more than in any previous cycles. So if you have any potential interest at all in putting new trees in the ground, either replanting a solid set bloc or resetting an existing grove, you should consider reaching out to the CRAFT team now to learn more about how their program and application process works.

They can't promise you funding assistance now – but they can explain how their procedures work. I can tell you that the folks that have taken advantage of, and invested in, the CRAFT new tree program so far have some very nice young blocs coming along.

On May 2, 2025, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins announced the latest slate of presidential appointments for key Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Rural Development (RD) State Director roles including Marcinda Kester's appointment as State Executive Director of the Florida Farm Service Agency.

Marcinda most recently served as the County Executive Director for Polk, Hillsborough, and Pinellas Counties in Florida. Prior to her role in Florida, she served as the Farm Programs Disaster Specialist and Farm Programs Chief for the Kentucky Farm Service Agency.

This is very good news for us, as Marcinda is an experienced and extremely competent FSA employee, who will hopefully be able to provide leadership to the offices that handle our claims. She may not be able to do much in regards to staffing levels – but hopefully will bring organization and expertise to the system.

Thank you to the 92 golfer's that joined us on April 24<sup>th</sup> for our Association's annual Golf Day, which is always sponsored by our good friends at Heartland National Bank. It was a beautiful day for outdoor recreation, and no one should have gone home hungry or thirsty. Thanks also to all of our other sponsors who made this event possible. See the story in this newsletter to see who all of the winners were.

The annual **Florida Citrus Conference**, put on by Florida Citrus Mutual, is coming up on June 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>. I am sure that it will be another great event, and I encourage industry stakeholders to participate. The educational sessions and industry meetings are very informative, and it never hurts to enjoy a little fellowship with your industry brethren. The low nightly hotel rate alone is a good reason to join the industry for a few days celebrating citrus in Bonita Springs.

**Citrus Expo 2025** is scheduled for August 20<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup>. Planning for the Expo, and its educational seminars, is now underway. Seminar topics and speakers are being discussed by a planning group now – so it is not too late to offer suggestions if you feel there is a topic that is important to be covered during Expo – just give me a call and let me know.

Our goal is to keep our members as informed as possible on a wide range of issues, so please never hesitate in contacting me day or night (cell: 863-381-8551) for additional information if you need it; or if I can be of any assistance in any matter, large or small. And remember that if you are not getting very regular e-mail updates from us - please let us know right away.

Thanks, Ray





# Info Notes

## Florida Citrus Growers' Institute

The 2025 Florida Citrus Growers' Institute was held on Tuesday, April 8, 2025 on the campus of South Florida State College. Presentations from the 2025 Institute will be available on the Citrus Agents website: <https://citrusagents.ifas.ufl.edu/>.

## Restricted Use Pesticide Exams

Restricted Use Pesticide Exams Restricted Use Pesticide exams are done using laptops at most UF/IFAS county Extension offices. In Highlands County, the Extension office is scheduling exams for two days each month through October 2025. You can schedule your exam online at <https://pesticideexam.ifas.ufl.edu/public/countyList.faces>.

## 2024-2025 Florida Citrus Production Guides

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

## Growing Citrus - A multipronged HLB strategy

This 17 page 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>.

## 2024-2025 Operation Cleansweep

Operation Cleansweep is a mobile pesticide collection program that provides farmers, nursery operators, golf course operators, and pest control services a one-time safe and economical way to dispose of up to 1,000 lbs. of their canceled, suspended, and unusable pesticides for free. For information about participating, call 877-851-5285,

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## UF/IFAS Podcasts for Growers

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

## 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.

## Sales Tax Exemption Forms for Ag Uses

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

## UF/IFAS OJ Break Programs

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

## FDOC Webinars

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

## "Florida OJ Break" License Tags

The HCCGA office has a very good supply of the "Take A Florida Orange Juice Break" license plates, and a few other types of citrus related tags, to share. Stop by the HCCGA office and get one for your vehicles.

# 2025 HCCGA Annual Member Directory

We will soon start preliminary production work on our 2025 Annual Grower & Associate Member Directory. This year we plan to have the Directory distributed to Association members in late July.

This booklet has become a valuable resource guide for our members, grower and associate alike. This year's directory will include Association information such as: Grower contact information, Associate Member Bios, Sponsorship Recognitions, Board Members, Officers, etc.



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

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

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

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# Citrus & Specialty Crop Expo Seminars Focused on Fighting HLB

The team who works to bring you the educational seminars for the Citrus & Specialty Crop Expo has been developing this year's agenda. The program will highlight key developments in research and practices that can be used in your groves today to mitigate the effects of HLB.

"We have a wide range of topics that will be covered during the Citrus & Specialty Crop Expo," says Tripti Vashisth, who is helping coordinate speakers from the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences. "We will have presentations on gene editing and transgenics to develop trees with resistance or tolerance to HLB. There will be presentations on the physiology of HLB and how that can be used to seek tolerance. We will also discuss grove management tools available to growers to enhance production, disease and pest management. Our aim is to provide growers with practical information that can be applied to groves right now and to look a little down the road to future solutions."

Some citrus seminar highlights include:

- Update on testing of genome-edited lines developed to resist HLB
- A deeper look at oxytetracycline (OTC), its degradation and new advancements in automated trunk injection
- How different varieties respond to OTC
- The role soil health plays in rehabilitation of HLB-affected trees and overall plant health
- A systems approach to the use of plant growth regulators and other horticultural strategies to boost fruit yield and quality

In addition to the seminars, the event's trade show will feature the inputs and services needed to grow Florida's signature crop. The vendors will have plenty of giveaways and prize drawings throughout the event.

The Citrus & Specialty Crop Expo takes place Aug. 20–21 at the Florida State Fairgrounds in Tampa. Don't miss this premier event for growers. Preregistration will open in early June.



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## Collaborating with Growers to Develop Programs for Their Needs

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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 tradeshow, 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! 



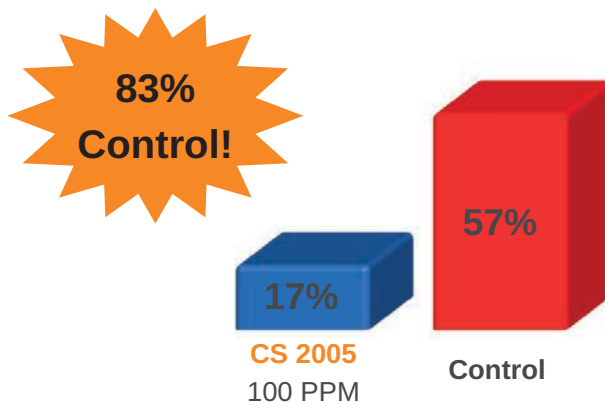
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**Tuesday June 10<sup>th</sup> , 2025**

8:30 am - 2:30pm

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& Water Conservation District



Please [register here](#) or scan the QR code. For more information contact **Sheila McNamara** at **352-678-7015** or **smcnamara@cfrpc.org**

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

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



# Citrus Research and Field Trials (CRAFT) Foundation Update

## **Supplemental PEP Application**

The CRAFT Supplemental PEP application period closed April 30<sup>th</sup>. Thank you to all the growers that showed interest in the program and to those that applied. Contracts should be issued to the selected projects this month (May 2025).

## **ETT Program**

The CRAFT Foundation Board of Directors approved amendments to all Existing Tree Therapy (ETT) Round 1, 2, and 3 contracts that revise the contract payment schedule. The amendment allows Participants to be eligible for Payment 3 upon the submission of the data for the harvest year following the second year's approved treatment, which is a year earlier than the current payment schedule. The Board authorized this change to provide participating growers with the final contractual participation payment to assist with their treatment costs.

This change means many Participants will be eligible for their third and final payment this year. For example, a Participant that applied their first treatment in 2023 and that has received their second Payment, may be eligible for the third and final payment following submission of the 2024-2025 harvest year data to CRAFT.

All data submission surveys are available on the CRAFT website Data Entry Page at <https://craftfdn.org/craft-existing-tree-therapies-data-entry>.

There are separate data surveys for each ETT Round. For example, Round 1 contracts will have a 1,000 series number (i.e. ETT-1076) and must submit their data using the Round 1 surveys.

The ETT amendments have been mailed and emailed to all participants and were due to be returned by April 30, 2025. If you have not executed and returned your amendments, please do so immediately. The submittal of the third year's treatment and harvest data remains a contractual requirement for all ETT participants. The survey to submit this information will be made available to all participants later this year.

## **Upcoming CRAFT Programs**

CRAFT is closely monitoring this year's legislative session in Tallahassee. Once we have a clearer understanding of available funding, CRAFT will announce program timelines and program rules for the next program year. If you would like the latest CRAFT information, please email Steven Hall at [Steven@craftfdn.org](mailto:Steven@craftfdn.org) to be added to our mailing list.

## **CRAFT Well Wishes**

The Board and Staff of CRAFT wish a speedy recovery to our intrepid Board member, Mr. Johnny Updike. His experience and enthusiasm for CRAFT and the citrus industry are unparalleled. We eagerly anticipate his swift recovery and look forward to seeing him back in action soon.

Growers with any questions or seeking additional information about the CRAFT program are encouraged to contact Executive Director Steven Hall at [Steven@craftfdn.org](mailto:Steven@craftfdn.org) or (863) 333-2931, Assistant Program Manager Tina Buice at [Tina@craftfdn.org](mailto:Tina@craftfdn.org), or Scientific Coordinator Carisa Keller at [Carisa@craftfdn.org](mailto:Carisa@craftfdn.org).



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# Citrus Commission Appointments

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis recently appointed five new members to the Florida Citrus Commission (FCC) and reappointed five members. The new appointees are Emma Ezell, Sean Frielich, Vernon Hollingsworth III, Daniel Hunt and Melanie Ressler. Steve Johnson, Carlos Martinez, William Poulton, Daniel Sutton and John “Patrick” Schirard were reappointed. The FCC is the governing board of the Florida Department of Citrus. The appointments are subject to confirmation by the Florida Senate.

## **EZELL**

Ezell, a grower member representing District 3, is a harvesting and hauling coordinator at Reynolds Farms, Inc. She is a member of the Highlands County Citrus Growers Association and the Highlands County Planning and Zoning Committee and was the recipient of the Junior Chamber International Florida Outstanding Young Farmer Award. She earned her bachelor's degree in business from Florida Southern College. Her term will expire May 31, 2027.

## **FRIELICH**

Frielich, representing statewide processors, is vice president of technical services for Florida's Natural Growers. He currently serves as president of the Florida Citrus Processors Association and previously served as chairman of the Juice Products Association. He earned his bachelor's degree in biological sciences and chemistry from the University of Florida. His term will expire May 31, 2027.

## **HOLLINGSWORTH**

Hollingsworth, a grower member representing District 2, is president of VCH Management, Inc. He previously served as chairman of the Farm Service Agency and earned his bachelor's degree in citrus from Florida Southern College. His term will expire May 31, 2028.

## **HUNT**

Hunt, a grower member representing District 5, is vice president of Hunt Brothers Cooperative. He currently serves as treasurer of the Citrus Research and Field Trial Foundation, Inc. and is a member of the Wedgworth Leadership Institute. He earned his bachelor's degree in industrial engineering and his master's degree in business administration from the University of Florida. His term will expire May 31, 2026.

## **RESSLER**

Ressler, the statewide packer representing the Indian River production area, is co-chief executive officer at IMG Enterprises, Inc. She is a member of the Florida Citrus Packers Association board and the Citrus Administrative Committee. She earned her bachelor's degree in business administration from Stetson University and her master's degree in business administration from Paris Graduate School of Management. Her term will expire May 31, 2026.

***See APPOINTMENTS on page 13***



# YOUR SOURCE FOR CITRUS INDUSTRY NEWS, EVENTS AND INFO

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## **APPOINTMENTS, Con't. from page 11**

### **JOHNSON**

Johnson, a grower member representing District 4, is president and owner of Johnson Harvesting, Inc. He is vice president of the Florida Farm Bureau and earned his bachelor's degree in agricultural operations management from the University of Florida. His term will expire May 31, 2028.

### **MARTINEZ**

Martinez, representing statewide processors, is a procurement manager for the Coca-Cola Company in Auburndale. He earned his bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of Central Florida and his master's degree in Christian theology from St. Leo University. His term will expire May 31, 2026.

### **POULTON**

Poulton, representing statewide processors, is the senior director of global procurement for Tropicana Products, Inc. The Navy veteran earned his bachelor's degree in chemistry from Duke University. His term will expire May 31, 2028.

### **SUTTON**

Sutton, serving as a statewide large grower, is president and general manager of Alico Citrus. He earned his bachelor's degree in citrus from Florida Southern College. His term will expire May 31, 2026.

### **SCHIRARD**

Schirard, a grower member representing District 6, is director of Citrus Extracts, LLC. He is president of the Indian River Citrus League and earned his bachelor's degree in agriculture from the University of Florida. His term will expire May 31, 2027.

**Source: Gov. Ron DeSantis**



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# Citrus Hall of Fame Inductees

The annual Citrus Hall of Fame Luncheon was held on March 28 at Florida Southern College honoring three exceptional individuals: the late Dr. Charles W. Adams, Dr. James H. "Jim" Graham and Daniel R. "Dan" Richey. These influential Florida citrus industry leaders were recognized for their significant contributions to Florida's citrus industry from pioneering grove management to groundbreaking research and global trade efforts. Their dedication and leadership are leaving a legacy that will continue to shape the future of Florida citrus for years to come.



*Dr. James H. "Jim" Graham, whose career has spanned 34 years at the UF Citrus Research and Education Center and extension program, is pictured alongside his family.*

*Dan Richey, President of Riverfront Packing and an appointed advisor to the USDA Agricultural Technical Advisory Committee (ATAC) for Fruits and Vegetables, is pictured with his family.*



*The family of the late Dr. Charles W. Adams is pictured. Dr Adams was a pioneer in Florida's citrus industry.*




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# Highlands County Florida OJ Month

The Highlands County Board of County Commissioners declared the month of May to be **Florida Orange Juice Month** in the Highlands County (*the only county in Florida to do so*) during their May 6<sup>th</sup> Board meeting with a proclamation.

## **Highlands County OJ Month Proclamation**

*Whereas, Florida is the largest producer of orange juice in the United States and second in the world; and*

*Whereas, Highlands County is one of the leading citrus producing counties in the State of Florida; and*

*Whereas, the Florida Citrus industry has been an integral part of the Florida and Highlands County economy for the past century with an annual economic impact of \$6.5 billion and support of 37,000 jobs throughout the state; and*

*Whereas, Florida Orange Juice is the state beverage of Florida; and*

*Whereas, Florida Orange Juice is both great tasting and provides nutritional benefits such as vitamin C, potassium and folate.*

*Now, Therefore, the Highlands County Board of County Commissioners of Highlands County, Florida (the Board) does hereby acknowledge and proclaim that May 2025 shall be known as “**Florida Orange Juice Month**” in Highlands County, Florida.*

*Further, to celebrate this designation, the Board encourages all Highlands County residents and Floridians across our State to take a “**Florida Orange Juice Break**” and reflect on the wide range of positive impacts that this long-standing industry has had on our community.*

*Done and adopted this 6<sup>th</sup> day of May 2025.*

Arlene Tuck, Chairwoman

HIGHLANDS COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS



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# IPCs: To Tie or Not to Tie?

By Fernando Alferez and Osbaldo Vasquez

As individual protective covers (IPCs) are being adopted as a standard management practice to protect newly planted citrus trees from psyllid infestation, it has become apparent that one of the main effects of this tool is improved tree growth.

Trees under IPCs grow larger with thicker canopies. This is probably the result of healthier trees that perform better because they don't allocate resources to fight with the greening disease. It may also be the result of some mild shading that improves vegetative growth and the effect of less evapotranspiration due to the special environment that the IPC mesh creates.

UF/IFAS researchers have determined in different trials that the vapor pressure deficit is lower under IPCs than in the surrounding atmosphere. This results in less evapotranspiration in the covered trees. These observations have been done in trees where IPCs are zip-tied at the bottom.

However, many growers are not zip-tying the bags. They leave the bottoms open. This has advantages as installation of the covers is faster and less labor intense. In addition, a loose bottom may allow some beneficials to enter the canopy while reducing 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.

Zip-tying may have some implications not only for tree growth but also for irrigation frequency and water-use efficiency. To address these questions, UF/IFAS researchers are conducting several trials. So far, they have seen that vapor pressure deficit is indeed significantly different when comparing zip-tied or open-bottom IPCs. It is still too early to determine if more frequent irrigation will be necessary in open-bottom IPC trees to achieve the same growth as in zip-tied IPC trees. This information is currently being collected and will be available soon.

**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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# 2025 HCCGA Golf Day

The Highlands County Citrus Growers Association's annual golf tournament took place on Thursday, April 24<sup>th</sup>, at the SUN 'N LAKE Golf Club in Sebring with twenty-four foursomes taking to the links for a great afternoon of fellowship and outdoor recreation.

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

A burger bar luncheon preceded the 1:00 PM tee off, there was plenty of liquid refreshments on the course and participants enjoyed some great post play hors d'oeuvres as the hole contests and flight winners were announced, and 31 raffle drawing prizes courtesy of **Cowpokes Watering Hole**

**Restaurant, Lykes Bros., C. Elton Crews Groves, Sandhill Grill, FMC, Creative Printing, The Blueberry Patch, Agromillora Florida, Wild Turkey Tavern and KeyPlex** were given away.

Our friends at **Duke Energy** and **Diamond R Fertilizer** sponsored the pre-play tune up driving range and putting green respectively. A best ball 4-player scramble format was utilized for tournament scoring, and the 24 foursomes were divided into three flights with each player

assigned an A, B, C or D handicap level for the "Closest-to-the-Line", "Long Drive", and "Closest-to-the-Pin" competitions. Each contest winner received a \$50.00 **Cowpokes Watering Hole Restaurant** gift certificate.

Winning the closest-to-the-line contests, both sponsored by **Magna Bon II** in their respective groups were **Jeremy Nipper** for A & B players and **JR Gough** for C & D players.

The long drive contests, sponsored by **HC Commissioner Scott Kirouac** and **Aglime Sales**, were won by **David Stephens** in the A & B players group and **Chad Warrick** in the C & D players group.

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



**See GOLF on page 18**



### ***GOLF, Con't. from page 17***

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

In Flight #1, the **KeyPlex** team of **Bo Brooker, Jay Belflower** and **Heath Prescott** took top honors with a -15 score of **57**. Finishing second in the flight was the **Bayer CropScience** team of **Brad Blank, Kyle Braxton, Dustin Blank** and **Nick Mazzola** with a score of **60**.

Winning Flight #2 with a -10 score of **62** (*after a match of card*) was the **Everglades Equipment** team of **Brad Lundy, Jeremy Nipper, David Lively** and **Gary Noel**. Finishing second in the flight, also with a score of **62**, was the **Brandt Consolidated** team of **JR Gough, Doug Purvis, Wade Carter** and **Matt Story**.

In Flight #3, the winning foursome with a -8 score of **64** was the **Magna Bon/KeyPlex** team of **Chad Gillyard, Walt Snappley, W.W. Cornell** and **Shannon Newman**. Finishing second in the flight with a -7 score of **65** was the **Tropicana** team of **Steve Riffle, Buddy Duke, Anthony Pascher** and **Bradley Bennett**.

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

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# 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

## PGRs Can Produce Remarkable Results

Tripti Vashisth, associate professor of horticultural sciences with UF/IFAS has been studying the use of plant growth regulators (PGRs) to improve citrus tree health and fruit retention for several years now. Her work has culminated into a systems approach of when to use a particular PGR at a certain time for a desired effect.

Vashisth joined the **All In For Citrus Podcast** recently to discuss her research. She spoke about how cytokinins, gibberellic acid and other auxins are a sustainable approach that can perform as well as oxytetracycline (OTC) when applied correctly at the right time. She also noted these materials can be tank-mixed with other products, making the applications more efficient and cost-effective. The use of PGRs will be especially helpful when growers must take a year off from applying OTC per label requirements.

“We are applying the cytokinins with the spring flush with some calcium nitrate,” Vashisth said. “Then we had gibberellins applied in the summer with some nutritional products and potassium nitrate to enhance the fruit quality. With a good irrigation regime, we found excellent results. We saw improvements in yield by 50 pounds more fruit per tree in the first year, which I think is remarkable. Even though I have been working with PGRs for a number of years, getting that response in the first year is beautiful.”

In this trial, Vashisth was using a cytokinin product that is not currently labeled for citrus, but she is currently working on its registration. The product is called Sitofex. “This is very potent cytokinin, so I am really excited about getting this labeled for use in citrus,” she said.

To learn more about maximizing the use of PGRs in citrus, check out the April episode of **All In For Citrus** at: <https://citrusindustry.net/allinforcitrus>. The **All In For Citrus Podcast** series is a partnership between UF/IFAS and AgNet Media.

Courtesy of AgNet Media

# USDA Citrus Crop Forecast Update

May 12, 2025

## **All Oranges 11.6 Million Boxes**

The 2024-2025 Florida all orange forecast released on May 12, 2025 by the USDA Agricultural Statistics Board is up less than 1 percent at 11.6 million boxes. If realized, this will be 36 percent less than last season's final production. The forecast consists of 4.58 million boxes of non-Valencia oranges (early, mid-season, and Navel varieties) and 7.05 million boxes of Valencia oranges.

## **Non-Valencia Oranges 4.58 Million Boxes**

The forecast of non-Valencia orange production is down slightly at 4.58 million boxes. The Navel forecast, included in the non-Valencia portion of the forecast at 100,000 boxes is 2 percent of the non-Valencia total.

## **Valencia Oranges 7.05 Million Boxes**

The forecast of Valencia orange production is up slightly at 7.05 million boxes. The Row Count survey conducted April 28-29, 2025, indicated 99 percent of the Valencia rows are harvested. Processors were surveyed regarding fruit processed through April 30th and the estimated quantity remaining to be processed to the end of the season. Analysis of the results of the processors survey support holding the Valencia orange forecast.

## **All Grapefruit 1.30 Million Boxes**

The forecast of all grapefruit production is 1.30 million boxes. The white grapefruit forecast is 140,000 boxes. The red grapefruit forecast is 1.16 million boxes. The Row Count survey, conducted April 28-29, 2025, indicated that harvest on grapefruit is complete.

## **Lemons 600,000 Boxes**

The forecast of lemons is 600,000 boxes, unchanged from the previous forecast.

## **Tangerines & Mandarins 400,000 Boxes**

The forecast for tangerines and mandarins is unchanged at 400,000 boxes. This forecast number includes all certified tangerine and mandarin varieties.



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# 2025 Hurricane Season Projection

Colorado State University (CSU) released its forecast for the 2025 Atlantic hurricane season on April 3rd, predicting an above-average season for tropical storms and hurricanes. The forecast is for 17 storms, nine of which will become hurricanes and four of which will reach Category 3 status or stronger. That is slightly above the 30-year average tally for both hurricanes and storms, and also near the tally of 18 storms, 11 hurricanes and five Cat 3-plus hurricanes in 2024.

Early tropical symptoms suggest a slightly more active Atlantic hurricane season than average is ahead. However, the season could be a slight step down from 2024. CSU's prediction cites warm ocean temperatures in the subtropical Atlantic and the Caribbean Sea as the main factors, as well as calmer winds in the upper atmosphere – usually referred to as wind shear – due to a possibly weak or neutral El Niño, a naturally-occurring shift in the winds.

## ***Lack Of El Niño, Plus Possibility of La Niña:***

The lack of a hurricane-suppressing El Niño is anticipated for all of this upcoming hurricane season. There is a moderate chance of La Niña conditions during the heart of hurricane season (August through October), according to the latest forecasts from NOAA. This is the reason for the slightly elevated hurricane season activity. The phase of El Niño vs. La Niña is one of the strongest influences on hurricane season activity.

In general, La Niña Atlantic hurricane seasons have less wind shear that can otherwise rip storms apart, and more rising, unstable air that is more conducive for thunderstorms, the building blocks of tropical storms and hurricanes. If a La Niña develops, it could increase the number of storms and hurricanes.

Neutral conditions – when water temperatures don't have much effect on global patterns – may remain in place through much of hurricane season and could limit any influence, especially early in the season.

## ***Water Temperatures Remain Warm, But Not Across The Board:***

The Gulf and Caribbean are slightly warmer than average but are cooler than they were this time last year. More significantly, water temperatures in the eastern Atlantic, including parts of the region known as the Main Development Region (MDR), are closer to average, if not slightly cooler, and substantially cooler than last year. The MDR is the primary host location for hurricanes that threaten the U.S. and Caribbean during the peak of hurricane season. Should this lukewarm to cooler water stick around several months from now, it would be a major speed bump for tropical development in that region.

## ***What is an average hurricane season?***

According to the NOAA Climate Prediction Center, an average Atlantic hurricane season sees:

- 14 named tropical storms
- 7 hurricanes
- 3 "major" hurricanes (Category 3 or higher)

***See HURRICANES on page 22***

## ***HURRICANES, Con't. from page 21***

### **2024 Atlantic hurricane season: Prediction forecast vs. actual**

CSU's 2024 Atlantic hurricane season prediction:

- 23 named tropical storms
- 12 hurricanes
- 6 "major" hurricanes (Category 3 or higher)

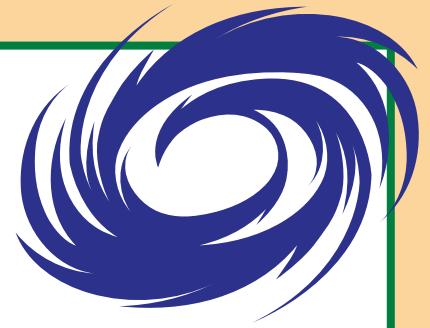
2024 Atlantic hurricane season actual:

- 18 named tropical storms
- 11 hurricanes
- 5 "major" hurricanes (Category 3 or higher)

### ***How likely will a tropical storm or hurricane make landfall in the U.S. this year?***

CSU also looks at the probability of whether a "major" hurricane – Category 3, 4, or 5 storm – will make landfall in the U.S., along Florida's Coast, or within the Gulf Coast.

- 51% for the entire U.S. coastline (average from 1880–2020 is 43%).
- 26% for the U.S. East Coast, including the Florida peninsula (average from 1880–2020 is 21%).
- 33% for the Gulf Coast from the Florida panhandle westward to Brownsville, Texas (average from 1880–2020 is 27%).
- 56% for the Caribbean (average from 1880–2020 is 47%)



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- **BRANDT Smart B-Mo** - high efficiency foliar boron/molybdenum
- **Celite® 610** - mechanical insecticide that contains 100% diatomaceous earth, OMRI Listed

### **Complexed Nutrients:**

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

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

### **Summer Oil Sprays:**

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

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

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