

Citrus connection



HIGHLANDS COUNTY CITRUS GROWERS **President's Column** by Aaron Nelson

Less humid days, color break in early maturing varieties and the very beginning of the fresh fruit harvest. These are some of the hallmarks of early fall for Florida citrus. Another benefit of the calendar turning to October is that we are on the downhill side of the Atlantic hurricane season. We aren't out of the woods yet as there have been storms in October many times before, but we are past the historical peak of the season and the curve will continue its decline each day until the end of hurricane season on November 30th. While this is undoubtedly good news, we still must be diligent about weather-related problems in our groves. I'm not talking about hurricanes but about brown rot.

September's rainfall has been on the one hand beneficial, but on the other, has presented a potential threat for early varieties in the form of brown rot. Brown rot is caused by the fungus *Phytophthora nicotianae* and *Phytophthora palmivora*; with the *palmivora* strain being the more severe in causing brown rot.

Sporangia are splashed by rainfall from the soil onto fruit throughout the canopy. Infected fruit in turn falls to the ground and rots producing more spores, in a vicious self-feeding cycle. The disease can spread extremely quickly and can easily decimate a crop, particularly in Hamlin and Navel groves. There are available and effective controls for brown rot if the problem is detected in time. Be on the lookout as this is the time of year when the disease manifests itself.

There is a cautious optimism amongst the growers that I most often talk to that the OTC treatments that were done earlier this year are having some impact. The crop load is still less than ideal, but there are some encouraging signs. The results vary from block to block but there does seem to be a positive effect on tree health, fruit retention and maybe even slightly better quality. These positive trends are leading some growers to reconsider production inputs like tree removal and resetting. While the jury is still out on the full effect that OTC treatments might provide, there is, I believe, reason for optimism.

Any of the momentum that it feels like we are building could easily be squashed by an unchecked infection of brown rot. Brown rot can be a fickle problem. It's not everywhere and might not be anywhere. Sometimes you don't see it for years at a time and other times it can be relentless in certain blocks. Spending time in the field is always important, but you can't make too many tracks in the groves, especially this time of year.

SEPT 2023

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Aaron Nelson



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2023 Calendar of Events

November 14-16

Ag-Venture @ Highlands County Fairgrounds

December 9

2023 HCCGA Citrus Fun Shoot @ OK Corral Gun Club

Happy Halloween

from
The Highlands County Citrus Growers Association



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



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Executive Director's Report

BY RAY ROYCE

Hopefully securing the final funding streams for the UF/IFAS Plant Transformation Center will be accomplished soon. The center's mission is to speed up the plant breeding process by conducting evaluations and regulatory work in parallel, utilizing a world class operation that directly addresses our industry's needs. The center, will have a PhD-level director, a faculty steering committee to identify priorities, a working group and an external advisory board with citrus industry representation.



The center's primary location will be at the UF campus in Gainesville, and it will have seven academic units in genome modifications. Some of the technologies that will be included in the center are agrobacterium-mediated, biolistic, protoplast, TALENS, CRISPR, RNAi, and viral vector-mediated. The other location will be at the Lake Alfred CREC, led by Dr. Nian Wang.

Congratulations to our HCCGA Board member Riley McKenna for being selected to participate in Class XII of the Wedgworth Leadership Institute (WLI). He is joined in Class XII by 5 other HCCGA members: Dan Bott (PGIM), Miles Armstrong (BASF), Jason Johnson (Wedgworth Fertilizer), Dan Kimble (Harplyn) and Clay Pederson (Agromillora). Lucy Abell, a local Venus based cattle rancher, is also part of the 30 member WLI class.

The intensive two year WLI program is committed to helping prepare its participants, who are selected from across our state representing a wide range of agricultural commodities and allied industries, to be strong leaders within Florida's agriculture and natural resources community. Congratulations to all of those selected to WLI Class XII – especially our 6 HCCGA members.

If you are considering putting new trees in the ground in the coming year you should look into the info on CRAFT's website at: www.craftfdn.org about the Cycle Five **New Trees Plantings Program**.

Registration is open for the **2023 HCCGA Citrus Fun Shoot**, so save the date of **Saturday, December 9th** or better yet – get your registration flier filled out and sent in. We look forward to another great event at a new location this year – **OK Corral Gun Club**, located just east of Okeechobee. So get your shooting teams organized early and join us for a great day of outdoor camaraderie and a fabulous 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 22nd 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 small citrus operation joined the new group. I was invited to join the HCCGA Board of Directors in the early spring of 1993 and became the Association's fifth Board President 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

2023-2024 Florida Minimum Wage

Just a reminder that the third increase dictated by the 2020 constitutional amendment, raised Florida's minimum wage rate to \$12 an hour on September 30th. The voter-approved amendment will gradually lead to a \$15-an-hour minimum wage on September 30, 2026.

2023 Citrus Expo Presentations

The educational seminars at the 2023 Citrus Expo are now available online at: <https://crec.ifas.ufl.edu/citrus-research/presentations/citrus-expo-2023/>.

2023-2024 Florida Citrus Production Guides

The 2023-2024 Florida Citrus Production Guides are available to pick up at the UF/IFAS Highlands County Extension office or the handbooks are available online (with printable sections) at:

<https://crec.ifas.ufl.edu/resources/production-guide/>.

2023 Florida Citrus Growers' Institute Presentations Online

The 2023 Florida Citrus Growers' Institute was held on April 4th at the South Florida State College Avon Park campus. The educational presentations were recorded and are available online at the citrus agent's website: Here you will also find PDF versions of the slides.

<https://citrusagents.ifas.ufl.edu/archived-presentations/2023/>

UF/IFAS Podcasts for Growers

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

"Florida OJ Break" License Tags

The HCCGA office has a very good supply of the "Take A Florida Orange Juice Break" license plates to share. Please feel free to stop by the HCCGA office and get one for your vehicles. We also have a limited supply of a few other types of OJ related tags.

Sales Tax Exemption Forms for Ag Uses

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

UF/IFAS Research Website

The updated Citrus Research and Education Center (CREC) website at <https://crec.ifas.ufl.edu/citrus-research/> is now live. The revamped site has the latest research information on HLB management, detailed information on rootstock trials, access to on-line presentations from UF/IFAS research scientists, EDIS documents sorted by topic for easy access, and more.

UF/IFAS OJ Break Programs

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

Restricted Use Pesticide Exams

Restricted Use Pesticide exams are done using laptops at most UF/IFAS county Extension offices. Whether you are taking the test for the first time, renewing your license, or adding a new category, you can take your exam at most county Extension offices. In Highlands County, the Extension office is scheduling exams for Wednesdays and Fridays. You can schedule your exam online at <https://pesticideexam.ifas.ufl.edu/public/countyList.faces>.

FDOC Webinars

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



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2023 HCCGA Citrus Fun Shoot

December 9th

Registration is now open for the **2023 HCCGA Citrus Sporting Clays Fun Shoot** that will take place on **Saturday December 9th**. While our Fun Shoot has continued to evolve over the past 26 plus years, some things remain the same for us – providing a great opportunity for fellowship with others within our industry and greater agricultural community, fun shooting, great food and some fabulous green bird station and raffle prizes.

Our 26th Annual Citrus Fun Shoot and Prime Rib & Seafood luncheon extravaganza will be held at the **OK Corral Gun Club**, a world class shooting destination located just east of Okeechobee, for the first time this year.

OK Corral Gun Club, situated on a 350 acre site, is one of Florida's premier outdoor shooting and recreational facilities. The club has two 15 station sporting clays courses, a 7 station sub gauge course, 2 FITSAC Parcours, rifle and pistol ranges, a cowboy action shooting range, an elevated wobble deck, a trap and skeet range and a fully stocked pro shop. The club also has a large air-conditioned ballroom that our event's Seafood & Prime Rib luncheon will be based in, 24 cabins and several multi bedroom houses available for rent if desired. They have also recently added several pickle ball courts if you, or others in your party, want to add other activities to the day or an overnight stay. For more information about **OK Corral Gun Club**, go to: www.okcorralgunclub.com.

We want to thank our shoot's Title Sponsors: **TradeMark Nitrogen, Alan Jay Fleet Sales, PGIM Real Estate, Hood Citrus Caretaking, Peace River Citrus Products, Magna-Bon, AgNet Media, Tropicana Brands Group, Cowpokes Watering Hole Restaurant, CRAFT, Glade & Grove Supply, Syngenta, Carden & Associates, Cutrale Citrus Juices USA, Wedgworth Fertilizer, Everglades Equipment Group, Natalie's Orchid Island Juice Company, and Duke Energy.** Our Seafood & Prime Rib Luncheon sponsor is **Farm Credit of Florida.**

Florida State Sen. Ben Albritton is sponsoring our Live/Online Scoring, and again this year through our association with **Score Chaser** (www.scorechaser.com.) you will be able to access scores online during and after the shoot. Our HC County Attorney **Sherry Sutphen** and her law firm **Roper PA** are sponsoring our "Shooters Only" gun raffle drawing again this year. Every participant will also receive a very nice complimentary 16 X 25 shooting towel courtesy of **Quality Roofing & Sheet Metal.**

We will once again have 5 Green Bird Stations on each of the two courses we will utilize for the shoot that will provide for a chance for those shooters hitting a green bird to be in drawings for 10 great prizes, and **HC Sheriff Paul Blackman, Bill Jarrett Ford, HC County Commissioner Chris Campbell, Quality Roofing & Sheet Metal** and **Harvey's Fertilizer & Chemical** are the sponsors of the green bird stations and the great prizes that will be drawn for.

Two additional sponsorship opportunities are still available for the Fun Shoot. Your company can be featured on apparel items for the participants and your name, message or logo will be seen during the event and for an extended time after the event out in the community. We will add the Fun Shoot logo, making these well-appreciated mementos of the event.

One sponsorship offers ball caps for 350. We chose top-of-the-line Richardson snap back hats with embroidery in two locations. Many embroidery colors are available. The cost of this sponsorship will be just about \$5000, as your company will pay for the cost of the hats and applicable taxes.

The other possible sponsorship is for 100% cotton short sleeve tee shirts with up to three colors screen printed in two locations, both front and back. To pay for the 350 shirts and embroidery, the cost will be about \$4200 for this sponsorship.

Call Ray to discuss specifics so your name will be seen everywhere at the Citrus Fun Shoot this year.

See the shoot registration flier on the next page for additional information about shooting participation and station sponsorship OR to get signed up for this great event.

We look forward to seeing you at **OK Corral Gun Club** on **Saturday, December 9th!**



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2023

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For additional information, contact Jan or 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.

For information about OK Corral Gun Club, go to: www.OKCorralGunClub.com.

Initial USDA Citrus Crop Forecast 2023-24



The 2023-2024 Florida all orange forecast released on October 12th by the USDA Agricultural Statistics Board is 20.5 million boxes, up 30 percent from last season's final production. The total includes 7.50 million boxes of non-Valencia oranges (early, mid-season, and Navel varieties) and 13.0 million boxes of Valencia oranges. The Navel orange forecast, at 300,000 boxes, accounts for 4 percent of the non-Valencia total.

The estimated number of bearing trees for all oranges is 38.7 million. Trees planted in 2020 and earlier are considered bearing for this season. Field work for the latest Commercial Citrus Inventory was completed in June 2023. Attrition rates were applied to the results to determine the number of bearing trees used to weigh and expand objective count data in the forecast model. Average fruit per tree includes both regular bloom and the first late bloom.

Non-Valencia Oranges 7.50 Million Boxes

The non-Valencia forecast of 7.50 million boxes is 22 percent more than last season's production. The estimated number of bearing trees (without Navels) is 13.3 million, down 9 percent from the previous season. The estimated fruit per tree for early and mid-season (non-Valencia) oranges is 342, a decrease of 144 pieces from last season, and the lowest in a series dating back to the 1964-1965 season. Projected fruit size is below the minimum, requiring an estimated 337 pieces of fruit to fill a 90-pound box. At 40 percent, projected droppage is above average. The Navel forecast of 300,000 boxes is 25 percent more than last season's production. The estimated number of bearing trees is 570,000, down 10 percent from the previous season. The estimated fruit per tree is 138, an increase of 29 pieces from last season. Projected fruit size is above average, requiring an estimated 138 pieces of fruit to fill a 90-pound box. Projected droppage is above average at 33 percent.

Valencia Oranges 13.0 Million Boxes

The Valencia forecast of 13.0 million boxes is 35 percent higher than last season's production. The estimated number of bearing trees is 24.9 million, down 5 percent from the previous season. The estimated fruit per tree is 279, a decrease of 47 pieces from last season, and the lowest in a series dating back to the 1964-1965 season. Projected fruit size is below the minimum, requiring an estimated 274 pieces of fruit to fill a 90-pound box. Projected droppage is above average at 40 percent.

All Grapefruit 1.90 Million Boxes

The forecast of all grapefruit production is 1.90 million boxes, 5 percent more last season's utilization of 1.81 million boxes. The total is comprised of 1.65 million boxes of red grapefruit and 250,000 boxes of white grapefruit. The red grapefruit forecast at 1.65 million boxes is 6 percent more than last season's final production. Bearing trees are down 4 percent from last season's revised bearing tree numbers. The average fruit per tree is 31 pieces less than last season. Fruit droppage is projected to be slightly above average. Fruit size at the final month is expected to be slightly below average. The white grapefruit forecast of 250,000 boxes is equal to last season's final production. White grapefruit bearing trees declined by 6 percent from last season's revised bearing tree numbers. The average fruit per tree at 479 pieces is 4 pieces less than last season, but 29 pieces more than the eight-year season average. Current fruit sizes are below average, and at the rate of growth measured in last month's survey, are expected to be below average at harvest. Final drop is expected to be slightly above average.

Tangerines and Tangelos 500,000 Boxes

The forecast for tangerine and tangelos is 500,000 boxes, 4 percent more last season's utilization of 480,000 boxes. This forecast number includes all certified tangerine and tangelo varieties.

Syngenta Citrus Internships - Summer 2024

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 28,000 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.

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- Soil sampling support (fungicides) - Ridomil & Orondis

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Chad Warrick
Syngenta Retail Rep
830-832-5269

chad.warrick@syngenta.com

Zach Langford
Florida Citrus Internship Coordinator
Syngenta Retail Rep

407-212-5631

zach.langford@syngenta.com



Follow QR Code or link to apply:

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

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Seeking Injection Alternatives and Additions

The Citrus Research and Development Foundation (CRDF) approved three new projects during its September board of directors meeting. The projects will test the injection of different antimicrobial materials to treat HLB.

One project will be managed by Ozgur Batuman, a citrus pathologist with the UF/IFAS. Another will be run by Kranthi Mandadi, a Texas A& M University plant pathologist. The third project funds research by consultants Henry Yonce and Tom Minter, who are working with a California-based company that has novel antimicrobial and pesticide products.

“For all three of these projects, there is early evidence that the products work well against the HLB bacteria,” said Rick Dantzler, CRDF chief operating officer. “We also invited a proposal from Yu Wang, a UF/IFAS food science professor. Dr. Wang has a very interesting library of natural products that have antibacterial qualities, so she would like to test them against the HLB bacteria. We think at least a few will work.

“All of this research is dedicated toward finding a substitute for oxytetracycline (OTC) in case the bacterium should develop resistance, or perhaps to find something that works even better.”

The board also put out bids on two other areas of OTC research. One is to test a novel OTC formulation that is pH neutral. OTC that is pH neutral could make it well suited for inclusion with other products, like pesticides, which can lose their efficacy if used with low pHs. Current OTC formulations require low pH. The second is to research OTC injection with the fungicides Kphite, ProPhyt and Magna-Bon CS 2005.

“This combination with OTC could be very consequential if it works,” Dantzler concluded.

Courtesy of AgNet Media



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Trunk Injection: Rootstock vs. Scion

By Ute Albrecht, Larissa Nunes and Gabriel Pugina

The current label recommends trunk injection of oxytetracycline (OTC) into the rootstock, but this may not always be possible. Previous UF /IFAS studies have shown that both rootstock and scion injections are effective. However, researchers have not yet studied if different rootstocks influence uptake and distribution of the OTC and if they respond differently to the wounding caused by the injections.

In an earlier study on young Valencia trees, the uptake rate of water was faster after injection into the scion than after injection into the rootstock. Recently, UF/IFAS initiated a study with 8-year-old Valencia trees to compare whether injection of OTC into the rootstock or scion is more effective. Also being compared are rootstock effects on uptake and OTC efficacy and wounding.

Five to six different rootstocks are compared on three different study sites. Injections were performed in April or May 2023 between 9 a.m. and 12 p.m. FlexInject injectors were filled with 100 milliliters OTC at the 11,000-parts per million label rate (1.1 grams OTC per tree), and the formulation was prepared on the morning of the injections. The drill bit size was 17/64-inch.

The uptake rate varied between trees and between study sites and ranged from less than 30 minutes to several hours. Different from the earlier study with water, no significant difference in the uptake rate of OTC between scion and rootstock was measured. The uptake rate varied between some of the rootstocks, but differences were neither consistent for rootstocks nor study site.

It is important to remember that the uptake and distribution of injected materials are driven by transpiration. Therefore, regardless of whether injecting into the rootstock or the scion, the uptake rate is fastest during periods of active transpiration (usually mid-to late morning) and when the trees are watered well and have fully expanded leaves. Sunny and dry conditions also enhance transpiration and therefore the uptake rate.

One reason not to inject into the rootstock is its proximity to the soil. An injection wound close to the ground is at higher risk for becoming an entry point for soil-borne, decay-causing organisms than a wound higher up on the trunk. One probable advantage of injecting into the rootstock as opposed to the scion is that the OTC has more time (distance) to disperse in the trunk before reaching the canopy, increasing the likelihood of a uniform distribution. This is especially true for trees that have a short trunk.

When using one injector per tree, it is advised to inject in line with the crotch of the scaffold branches. Injecting directly beneath or in line with a main branch will result in the injected material moving mostly or exclusively into the side of the canopy connected to that branch. This can easily be illustrated with dye injections.

Get more tips on trunk injection at: <https://citrusindustry.net/2023/03/07/top-10-best-practices-for-trunk-injection/>.

Ute Albrecht is an associate professor, Larissa Nunes is a research assistant, and Gabriel Pugina is a PhD student at the UF/IFAS SWFREC in Immokalee, FL.

Florida Ag Expo

Thursday November 9th

The **Florida Ag Expo** is scheduled for Thursday, November 9th. This year's Expo will be held from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Gulf Coast Research and Education Center in Wimauma, Florida.

The one-day Expo will host a tailgating experience for participating exhibitors and those attending the event in conjunction with the educational sessions that are still being finalized. It was a concept that was well received at the **Florida Grower Citrus Show** in Fort Pierce this past April.

Josh McGill, show director at AgNet Media, believes it will play well at this year's Expo. "This is a new fun idea for us. We did try it back in our April show, the Florida Citrus Show, for the first time. It was where we turned the trade show into more of a tailgating format. Exhibitors pulled their trucks in and prepared food right at the back of the truck," McGill said. "Anything from burgers and hot dogs to chips and dip to people even making paella fresh on site. It was a really fun atmosphere. "There was a lot of interesting food that was shared. Some exhibitors really got into it and really brought their 'A' game to showcase their cooking abilities. It made for a better environment where they got to have engaging conversations with the grower attendees. Exhibitors and growers all seemed to love it. We're excited to present this format at Florida Ag Expo."

"The exhibitors are really looking forward to it. I think they want to see some new life at this event, especially in the trade show portion of it. There are always great field tours and seminars, but this is something to really revive the trade show portion," McGill said. "They're excited to fire up the grills, bring out their best food and share conversations with some good growers."

You can pre-register for the **Florida Ag Expo** at: <https://floridagrower.net/2023/09/15/registration-open-for-florida-ag-expo/>.



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2024 Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame Inductees

Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Wilton Simpson and the Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame Foundation recently announced that **Eugene McAvoy**, **John Hoblick**, and **John Schlechter** had been chosen for induction into the Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame in 2024. The induction ceremony will be held at the Florida State Fair's Agricultural Hall of Fame Banquet on February 13, 2024.

Eugene McAvoy

McAvoy has spent more than 50 years supporting and advocating for the agriculture industry in Florida and around the world. McAvoy was a long-time educator and spokesperson for agriculture during his 25-year career with the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS).



He joined the Hendry County Extension Office in 1997 as the vegetable/horticulture agent. He became one of UF/IFAS' first regional specialized Extension agents in 2004. In 2005, McAvoy also took on the role of county Extension director for Hendry County. He maintained these dual responsibilities until his retirement in 2019.

McAvoy is well-known for his South Florida Pest and Disease Hotline, which he published biweekly during the vegetable production season until his retirement. The hotline provided growers with up-to-date information on pest and disease occurrence on more than 140,000 acres of South Florida vegetables.

John Hoblick

Hoblick is a third-generation farmer and owner of Hoblick Greens in DeLeon Springs. He has been a grower member of FernTrust Co-operative since 1996. He advocates for the livelihood and profitability of farmers and ranchers statewide.

His love for farming led him to become the president of Florida's largest agricultural organization, representing more than 131,000 member families. As a leader within the Florida Farm Bureau Federation, Hoblick tirelessly advocated for a wide range of issues, including trade, labor, rural broadband access, animal welfare, farm policies, food safety, energy, environmental regulations, water quality and water availability.

Hoblick helped shape significant state legislation that directly benefited Florida farmers and ranchers. These legislative accomplishments encompassed strengthening the Right to Farm statute, expanding tax exemptions for Florida's agricultural community, establishing agricultural certifications to prepare students for careers in agriculture and advocating for funding for UF/IFAS and the Fresh from Florida program.

See HALL OF FAME on page 14

HALL OF FAME, Con't from page 13

John Schlechter

Schlechter began his life-long career as a farmer after graduating from the University of Florida in 1958 and bought Everglades Farm Equipment from his father in 1971, making it a fourth-generation business within the Schlechter family.

Schlechter served on several boards aimed at supporting agriculture, such as the Sugarcane Growers Cooperative board for 10 years, the Pioneer Growers Cooperative board for 35 years, and the Florida Celery Exchange board for 10 years.

Schlechter's lifetime of service and hard work has been recognized by many organizations. He was named Ag Man of The Year by the Belle Glade Chamber of Commerce; while he and wife, Eleanor, were jointly honored with the Citizen of the Year award by the same organization; as well as the Farmer of The Year award from Western Palm Beach County Farm Bureau. Through his lifetime of service and hard work, Schlechter continues to make a profound impact on agriculture, his loved ones and his community.

Additional information about the Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame and induction banquet can be found at: FloridaAgHallofFame.org.

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Karah Holt

Internship

Coordinator

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Breeder Advice on Nutrition, Scions and Rootstocks

Citrus breeder Jude Grosser recently shared tips on tree nutrition and discussed some scion/rootstock combinations that should work well for trees producing juice oranges.

NUTRITION

Grosser became very interested in citrus nutrition several years ago in an effort to keep his newly bred trees healthy in the face of HLB. The University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences professor credits Florida citrus grower Maury Boyd with teaching him about nutrition. Boyd focused on nutrition as an aid to keeping trees healthy soon after HLB became widespread in the state in 2005. Grosser said the following nutrition observations and tips came from his own experience: HLB causes severe deficiencies of secondary nutrients and micronutrients — not nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium (NPK). The deficiencies are twice as great in the roots as in the leaves.

This problem must be corrected for restoration of proper vascular system function. HLB-affected trees need a constant enhanced supply of secondary/micronutrients year-round. Pay attention to nutrient ratios. A constant supply of micronutrients can stop fruit drop, improve fruit quality to pre-HLB levels and improve yields. Use of controlled-release fertilizer (CRF) is a good way to address this problem, but growers should pay close attention to the label, since many expensive CRF products only have NPK polycoated, and not the minor nutrients. The secondary nutrients and micronutrients must be polycoated, Grosser emphasized. High-quality CRF products are expensive, so Grosser and others are testing a soluble dry program on producing trees with four applications annually. The second and fourth applications contain enhanced CRF secondary nutrients and micronutrients.

ROOTSTOCK/SCION COMBINATIONS

Grosser's favorite orange scions for processing are Valquarius, Valencia B9-65 and OLL-4, 8 and 20. He thinks they can be viable with a good nutrition program on these rootstocks: UFR-1, UFR-2, UFR-4, UFR-5, UFR-6, UFR-7-12, UFR-15, UFR-17 and X639.

Grosser suggested that growers seek advice on which rootstocks to use in various conditions. Information about how to approach such as process can be found at: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/hs178>.

Three New UF/IFAS Citrus Breeding Program Releases

Take Home Messages:

- Three new scion cultivars with potential for processing and fresh market were released by the UF/IFAS CREC breeding program in the last year.
- A sweet orange-like hybrid, a seedless lemon, and a compact and uniquely attractive mandarin provide opportunities for diverse segments of the Florida citrus industry, including nurseries catering to the home landscape marketplace.
- These three new releases demonstrate the value of a broad-based breeding program to support various aspects of the commercial citrus industry, as well as to meet the needs of Florida's citizen gardeners throughout the state.

First is a seedless 'Eureka'-type lemon also selected for higher peel oil production, thus having dual purpose potential. It was tested as CE-D5-1-9-42 in Florida and in a large trial in South America. Unlike other Eureka's, this selection has been grown on Flying Dragon rootstock, so it seems unaffected by the typical incompatibility of 'Eureka' on trifoliate.

See ADVICE on page 18

ADVICE, Con't from page 17

The second release is an early maturing, seedless and easy to peel mandarin hybrid, currently known as RES 19-56. This selection is naturally compact, and it bears fruit precociously and annually, without cross pollination. It has a unique bearing habit, with fruit frequently produced in clusters. It has performed well in citrus under protective screen (CUPS), where its compact growth habit is advantageous in minimizing the need for hedging. Its unique tree structure and bearing habit also suggests that it may be a valuable cultivar for Florida's many home gardeners, as it could be maintained as a potted ornamental citrus tree in poolside patios and lanais.

Finally, a sweet orange-like hybrid selected as highly tolerant following more than 20 years of huanglongbing (HLB) exposure, known currently as 1859, was approved for release. Fruit of 1859 resemble sweet orange, mature beginning in mid-November and hold well on the tree until late January. During this time, their internal and external color improve significantly, finally developing a very deep orange color. The flavor is like sweet orange, though many people who tasted fruit or juice commented on tropical flavor notes.

For additional information, contact: Fred G. Gmitter Jr. at: fgmitter@ufl.edu.



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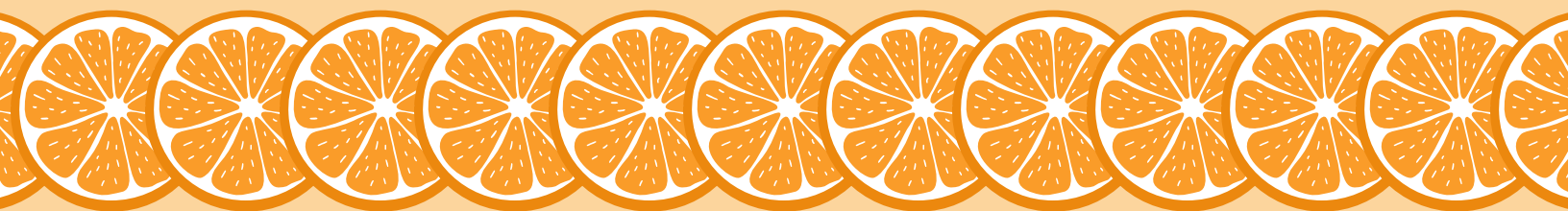
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The University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences and Southeast AgNet have partnered to provide the latest news on citrus-related research in monthly podcasts at: <http://citrusindustry.net/allinforcitrus/>

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



Combine Plant Growth Regulators for Most Benefit

Using the plant growth regulators (PGRs) gibberellic acid (GA), 2,4-D and cytokinin in combination can maximize the benefit for HLB-affected trees, researcher Tripti Vashisth reported recently. The UF/IFAS associate professor of citrus horticulture and production works at the CREC in Lake Alfred. She discussed the benefits of PGRs at August's Citrus & Specialty Crop Expo.

Timing Is Critical

Vashisth emphasized that timely PGR application is critical. She recommended applying cytokinin in spring, GA in summer and 2,4-D in fall. She noted that the combination of cytokinin in spring and GA in summer increased yield by about 90 pounds per tree.

Zeroing in on GA timing, Vashisth recommended the product be applied to Hamlin oranges from August to November and to Valencia oranges from September to December. She said GA use should be avoided from January to May, reporting that March to May applications enhance fruit set, which is not desirable given current tree conditions.

Vashisth said GA applications on grapefruit trees can help improve canopy, but GA should not be sprayed on grapefruit or any fresh variety past September.

Specific Benefits

Vashisth said GA can improve yield and canopy. 2,4-D can reduce the pre-harvest drop of fruit but doesn't seem to be helpful when fruit drop isn't an issue. Cytokinin can improve canopy growth.

Learn More

In recent years, Vashisth has led UF/IFAS research on how PGRs can improve the health of HLB-infected trees. She has conducted extensive research on the use of GA. To learn more about her GA work and research on cytokinin, read the Citrus Industry articles at: <https://citrusindustry.net/2023/01/17/the-promise-of-gibberellic-acid/>. and <https://citrusindustry.net/2023/04/21/cytokinin-studied-for-citrus-health-benefits/>.

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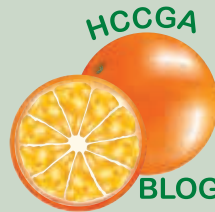
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CRAFT Program Updates

The CRAFT Board of Directors and Staff are pleased to announce that the application for Cycle 5 of the CRAFT new tree planting program is now available online at <https://craftfdn.org/craft-new-plantings/>. Any interested grower has until 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, November 30, 2023 to submit their application.

The CRAFT Board of Directors, with the help of the Technical Working Group, has established a list of Factors of Interest that includes areas of focus that are considered of higher interest for Cycle 5. This list, as well as rules for participation in the CRAFT program, can be found on the CRAFT website. Please note that this “Factors of Interest” list is not all-inclusive, and growers are encouraged to submit all project applications that they believe may be beneficial in the fight against HLB.

Additionally, the CRAFT Board of Directors has approved a **NEW CATEGORY** within Cycle 5. Along with the regular solid-set planting and reset categories, this Cycle will include a "Solid Set with PEP Materials" category. These projects will be between 20 and 50 acres and will look at equal plantings of 4 of the 5 scions propagated as part of the Program for Expedited Propagation (Parson Brown, Roble, Carney 2, Carney 3 and Donaldson) as well as one additional standard Hamlin to serve as a control. Growers who apply and are approved for participation in this category will receive \$8,000 per acre over the course of their agreement. Additional details can be found on the CRAFT website.

As always, if you have any questions or need more information, please feel free to reach out to Program Manager Tamara Wood at 863.698.9276 ~ tamara@craftfdn.org or Assistant Program Manager Tina Buice at 863.214.3731 ~ tina@craftfdn.org.

Carisa Keller to Serve as Scientific Coordinator for CRAFT

The CRAFT Foundation recently hired Carisa Keller to serve as the organization’s Scientific Coordinator. The Highlands County resident previously worked as Director of Sustainability for Alico.

“As CRAFT continues to grow its imperative that we continue to build a team that is ready and able to support the demands of the program,” said CRAFT Executive Director/Program Manager Tamara Wood. “As Scientific Coordinator Carisa will work closely with both grower participants and the Technical Working Group (TWG) to ensure projects meet the needs of the grower while also providing the valuable data that is the cornerstone of CRAFT.”

Keller will be working with CRAFT Executive Director Tamara Wood and Assistant Program Manager Tina Buice on all aspects of the program, while focusing primarily on the design development and oversight of CRAFT projects and serving as a liaison between the TWG and growers.

“My biggest passion is being able to help others and I am looking forward to helping make a difference for the citrus industry,” said Keller. “I am super grateful and excited to be a part of the CRAFT Foundation team.”



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