

# Citrus connection



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

November is a great time of year. Thanksgiving is right around the corner and many of us look forward to spending time with family, football season is at peak excitement (unless you're a Florida fan like me) and time spent working out in the groves doesn't leave you totally drenched with sweat.

We are also easing into the beginning of harvest season, and many of us are anxious to start seeing some harvest data that shows what effects we've had on our groves over the past year with OTC treatments and in the case of many growers, heavier usage of plant growth regulators such as gibberellic acid and 2,4-D. The answers to the questions many of us are asking will ultimately come once the groves have been picked.

With that being said, what I have seen with these different treatments on a purely observational level has been a mixed bag of results. While OTC has had an overall positive effect on tree health and, thus far fruit drop, it has not performed consistently in every block. Canopy density and fruit retention are often very different in comparable groves. The differences have been hard to correlate to something concrete such as a rate or time of year.

Learning what we can do better in year two of trunk injections is important, but is complicated by the inconsistent results from block to block. Plant growth regulators are even more inconsistent and difficult to evaluate. Gibberellic acid seems to keep fruit green, trigger a flush and reduce drop, but again the results in every grove are so inconsistent.

Adding another layer of complexity to evaluating PGRs is the potential for unintended consequences such as delaying maturation and affecting flowering in the spring. To complicate evaluation of these therapies even further is the fact that this is the first crop post Hurricane Ian in 2022. How much was our tree's ability to grow a healthy crop impacted by last year's storm?

These treatments are no doubt useful tools for growers. However, learning to use them in conjunction with one another is still something we need to figure out. Like I said earlier, as groves get picked, we will have more data points on how these treatments have affected this year's crop. As usual there are more questions than answers, but I am optimistic that we are building some momentum that we can carry into the future!

*Aaron Nelson*

**OCT  
2023**

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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

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

## Happy Thanksgiving from the Highlands County Citrus Growers Association



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# Executive Director's Report

BY RAY ROYCE

Our Association's friend, Senator Ben Albritton was officially designated as the next President of the Florida Senate for the 2024-2026 legislative term at a ceremony in the Senate Chamber of the Florida Capitol on October 17<sup>th</sup>. Congratulations to Ben on this accomplishment, and we thank him for his tremendous representation of our region of the State.



During the celebratory ceremony that I felt privileged to attend on that day; Sen. Albritton shared repeatedly how important he felt agriculture in Florida was to him, and how growing up in Florida's heartland and his family's citrus groves had played a critical role in shaping the very fabric of his being. He spoke about the importance of gaining "wisdom" from many family gatherings over the course of years as he progressed from the "kids table to the big table".

He reiterated multiple times that "faith, family, freedom, opportunity in life and agriculture were deeply rooted in his soul and would continue to be the driving influences in his life and everything he did moving forward". He also stated that "agriculture was within the very DNA of our State, and that the survival of agriculture was critical to the survival of humanity" and that he would support and defend our State's farmers.

He shared these experiences and perspectives with those attending his designation ceremony I believe in order for his Senate colleagues and the public to better understand how he would approach his upcoming role leading the Florida Senate.

I share this not only because we are extremely fortunate to have such a principled man as Sen. Albritton in a position of strong influence and leadership within our state's government, but that we need to continue to share our stories while we step up to the challenges we face in order to have a "seat at the big table".

On a similar note, we are indeed fortunate in Highlands County to have several other strong and well connected leaders representing us in Tallahassee and our nation's Capitol. Our State Senator, Erin Grall, is a very influential and hardworking advocate who spends a tremendous amount of time trying to better understand the wide range of needs of her constituents, and she will play a key role in the next legislative session early next year. The same is true for our homegrown Representative, Kaylee Tuck, who has been a great friend to our region's Ag community since she was elected to the Florida House. On the federal side, Congressman Scott Franklin has also been extremely active on the agricultural front and has pushed a wide range of legislation on behalf of the Florida citrus industry.

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](http://www.craftfdn.org) about the Cycle Five **New Trees Plantings Program**. The program has multiple opportunities for growers to take advantage of.

The **2023 HCCGA Citrus Fun Shoot**, is now less than a month away on **Saturday, December 9<sup>th</sup>**. We look forward to another great shoot at a new location this year – **OK Corral Gun Club**, located just east of Okeechobee. So get your shooting teams organized now and join us for a great day of outdoor camaraderie and a fabulous lunch. See the flier in this newsletter or give us a call if you have any questions on how to get involved.

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 30<sup>th</sup>. 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](mailto: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

The **2023 HCCGA Citrus Sporting Clays Fun Shoot** is coming up in just a couple of weeks on **Saturday December 9<sup>th</sup>**. 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 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Citrus Fun Shoot and Prime Rib & Seafood luncheon extravaganza will be held at the **OK Corral Gun Club**, located just east of Okeechobee (*9449 NE 48th Street, Okeechobee, FL*) for the first time this year.

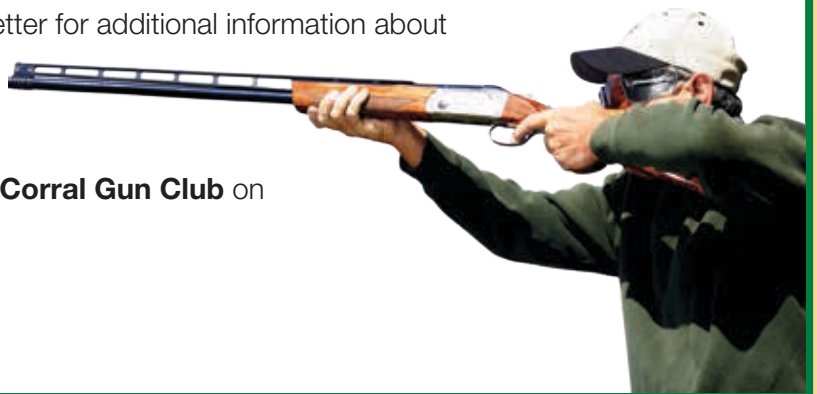
We want to thank our shoot's Title Sponsors: **TradeMark Nitrogen, Alan Jay Fleet Sales, PGIM Real Estate, Hood Citrus Caretaking, Peace River Citrus Products, Magna-Bon, AgNet Media, Tropicana Brands Group, Cowpokes Watering Hole Restaurant, CRAFT, Glade & Grove Supply, Syngenta, Carden & Associates, 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](http://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.

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

Look forward to seeing many of you at **OK Corral Gun Club** on **Saturday, December 9<sup>th</sup>**!



# 2023

# CITRUS FUN SHOOT



100 Target Fun Shoot • Dec. 9, 2023 • 8:30 am  
Held at OK Corral Gun Club

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Includes 100 target shooting round and lunch
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Includes lunch for one and a station sign
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Contact Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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**Please attach shooting participants' names and contact info (address, phone & e-mail) to the back of this form.**

For additional information, contact Jan or Ray at the HCCGA office at 863-385-8091 or [admin@hccga.com](mailto:admin@hccga.com).

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

For information about OK Corral Gun Club, go to: [www.OKCorralGunClub.com](http://www.OKCorralGunClub.com).



# IPCs Prove to Be Game-Changer in Citrus Production

By Amir Rezazadeh

Individual protective covers (IPCs) have evolved as an innovative option to ensure fruit protection during development and maturation. These innovative screens protect citrus from the elements, resulting in healthier and more colorful fruits that have a better flavor.

IPCs are typically made from specialized materials that allow sunlight, air and rain to pass through while creating a barrier against potential threats. The primary advantages of IPCs include:

\* **Pest Resistance:** One of the most significant advantages of IPCs is the physical barrier they create against pests. Insects such as aphids and thrips are notorious for destroying citrus trees, transmitting diseases and causing unsightly blemishes. With protective screens in place, these tiny invaders are thwarted, reducing the need for chemical pesticides and promoting an eco-friendlier growing environment.

\* **Weather Resilience:** Screens offer reliable protection against hail, heavy rainfall and other extreme weather conditions. Less physical damage to the fruit means growers can expect a higher yield of marketable fruit and reduced economic losses.

\* **Disease Prevention:** The screens can play a crucial role in preventing diseases that are spread by wind-borne pathogens or insects. Blocking the entry of these carriers effectively reduces the incidence of infections and leads to healthier trees and higher-quality fruit.

\* **Bird and Animal Deterrence:** Citrus trees and fruit can be destroyed by animals and birds, leading to significant losses. Protective screens keep these unwanted visitors off the fruit, which helps maintain higher yields and better-quality produce.

\* **Enhanced Growth Conditions:** The microclimate created by IPCs can provide a controlled environment that promotes healthier growth. Reduced wind stress and moderated temperatures can lead to more robust trees and better fruit development.

\* **Organic Cultivation:** With an emphasis on sustainable and organic farming practices, IPCs offer an effective solution to reduce chemical inputs and reliance on conventional pest control methods.

## Key Features & Setup

IPCs come in a wide range of shapes and sizes. The average adult psyllid is 0.57 millimeters wide. IPCs are made of monofilament high-density polyethylene or polyvinyl with a mesh size of 50 (50 holes per linear inch). This size is tiny enough to keep psyllids off the trees.

IPCs can range from 3 to 8 feet. A PVC pole with or without spreaders will need to be used with the net depending on the IPC's height. The net covers are either tucked into the tree wraps and fixed or they are secured outside the wraps and fastened tightly to the trunk and PVC pole using zip ties right below the graft union.

It is possible to set up IPCs on tree blocks or in resets. In mature groves, where the frequency of HLB is often higher and the risk of infection is greatest, IPCs are especially useful for planting reset trees in gaps created by dead or destroyed trees. IPCs should be installed immediately after trees are planted

See IPCs on page 8

**IPCs, Con't from page 7**

to protect them from psyllid infestation. While psyllid control can be minimized or eliminated, tree care can continue as usual. However, it is important to keep looking for signs of pests and diseases.

The length of time that IPCs can remain on trees is contingent on several factors, including rootstock/scion combination, grove management, tree age and cover size. Fast-growing trees on vigorous rootstocks or with vigorous scions can benefit from the availability of IPCs in a range of sizes since smaller screens can be swapped for bigger ones as the trees grow. It's time to upgrade to a larger IPC when the canopy has filled the bag (after about two years). Alternatively, you can choose to ditch the screens for good at that point.

**Summary**

IPCs have proven to be a game-changer in citrus production. These screens contribute to a more sustainable and environmentally responsible method of farming by reducing pests and optimizing the growing conditions for citrus trees. IPCs also improve the quality and production of citrus trees.

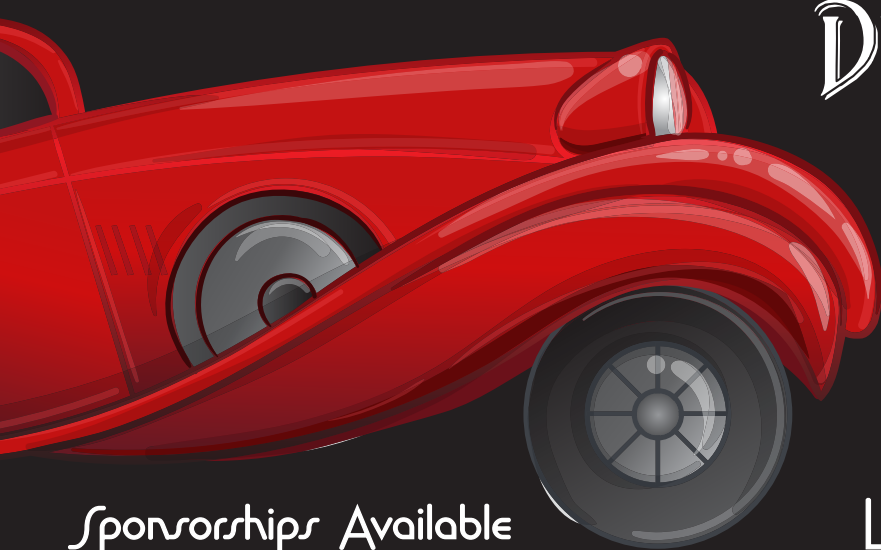
Growers using IPCs have reported considerable gains, including higher crop yields, higher quality fruit and less need for chemical pesticides. The citrus industry stands to benefit greatly from this innovation. As IPCs gain popularity, new quality and safety benchmarks for citrus fruit may be established.

Finally, the use of IPCs is a huge step forward for citrus production. These covers help growers protect their citrus trees from diseases, pests and environmental stresses, resulting in better-quality fruit for consumers. IPCs are a pioneering illustration of how technology can be used to conserve our crops at a time when the world is searching for innovative and sustainable solutions to ensure food security.

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# Labor Update

## New I-9 & I-129 Forms

Starting on November 1st, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) will only accept the new Forms I-9, with the edition date of 08/01/23, and I-129, with the edition date of 05/31/23, when completing the employment eligibility verification process.

This updated Form I-9 reflects the option for eligible employers to verify employment eligibility remotely. This edition is available now, and starting November 1, all previous versions will no longer be accepted. If you do not use the 8/01/23 edition of Form I-9, you

Beginning November 1, 2023, all H-2A, H-2B, CNMI-related Form I-129 petitions, Form I-129CW petitions, and CNMI-related Form I-539 applications must be filed directly at the Texas Service Center may be subject to penalties.

*Courtesy of Florida Citrus Mutual*

## 2022 ERP

While Florida Citrus Mutual, and others, continue to work daily on trying to securing additional Hurricane Ian relief funding through mechanisms such as a Block Grant program – the necessary federal legislative action to authorize such a program has not been forthcoming so far, and the likelihood of such action seemingly diminishes over time. So at this time the only avenue for growers to seek additional (*other than insurance and standard USDA programs*) disaster relief payments is the Emergency Relief Program (ERP).

ERP will provide payments to eligible crop producers for losses due to qualifying 2022 calendar year disaster events. Growers should be aware that due to “*progressive factoring*”, relief through ERP 2022 will be significantly less than earlier iterations of the ERP program. ERP 2022 will be administered through two tracks (referred to as Track 1 and Track 2), and the application period for both of these tracks opened on Tuesday, August 31, 2023.

Track 1 will assist eligible crop producers who received indemnities for eligible crop or tree losses through certain Federal crop insurance policies or payments for crop losses through the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP). Track 2 will assist eligible crop producers for other eligible crop and tree losses through a revenue-based approach. You can seek assistance through both Tracks as well.

For more information about the ERP for 2022 and to assist producers in the application process, you can contact either Florida Citrus Mutual or our HCCGA office in order to receive copies of, Florida Citrus Mutual's summary document, and the Track 1 and Track 2 fact sheets.

For any questions you have about the program and the application beyond that, you are encouraged you to reach out to your local Farm Service Agency directly for assistance. You may also want to consider seeking professional assistance from firms such as our associate member **Crop Disaster Recovery, LLC** if you do not have the appropriate staff to handle such claims.



**CS 2005**



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For more than 15 years, Magna-Bon has been helping citrus growers reduce copper toxicity in the soil. Our product, **CS 2005**, uses less than a quarter pound of copper per acre compared to several pounds with conventional coppers. With soil toxicity, this will drastically affect yields in the grove. Our systemic copper sulphate pentahydrate in-solution formula penetrates the stemmata of the citrus tree, absorbing **CS 2005** to combat diseases such as: *Brown Rot, Greasy Spot, Pink Pitting, Scab, Melanose, and Citrus Canker!*

## Industry Support

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

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

## Backed by Research

We have more than nine years of research with the UF/IFAS research program. Research by Dr. Jim Graham notes that not only does Magna-Bon **CS 2005** have systemic capabilities, it also helps with the suppression of citrus canker!

[Click Here to Watch Our Video on CS 2005 and See All Of Our Research Information!](#)

We believe in Florida citrus because it's our state. Our manufacturing plant is in Okeechobee, and we look forward to serving the agriculture community for many years to come!

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Dr. Jim Graham

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Product	Control Rate
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Control	57%

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AGRIAN [www.MagnaBon.com](http://www.MagnaBon.com) OMRI

# CRAFT Program Updates

Cycle Five of the CRAFT new tree planting program remains open for applications. The application can be found online at [craftfdn.org/craft-new-plantings](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 Five. 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 Huanglongbing. An update has been made to the general rules, expanding the acreage of eligible projects from a maximum of 100 acres to a maximum of 250 acres. As a reminder, there is no acreage limitation for an entity, only for individual projects. A grower or grower entity may submit as many applications for projects as they would like.

Additionally, the CRAFT Board of Directors approved a new category within Cycle Five. 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 100 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) compared to a standard Hamlin, which will serve as a control.

As of their November meeting, the CRAFT Board of Directors has agreed to amend the previous requirement that all PEP scions be on the same rootstock. Due to incompatibility between Roble and trifoliolate rootstocks, an alternate rootstock may be chosen for that scion only. The remaining four scions within a PEP project must all be on the same rootstock. 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.

The CRAFT Board of Directors has also voted to allow current Existing Tree Therapies projects to apply for inclusion in the CRAFT Cycle Five RESET category as well. Participants approved for inclusion in Cycle Five resets that are also included in the ETT category will be required to submit data separately for both categories.

## **Existing Tree Therapies:**

The CRAFT Board of Directors recently approved funding for all eligible applications recently submitted for Round Two of the Existing Tree Therapies program. This includes those projects that rolled over from Round One. CRAFT staff is in the process of finalizing contracts for these projects and will be sending those out to growers as soon as possible. Staff hopes to have all contracts out by mid-November, however with more than 900 applications the process does take some time. Everyone's patience is appreciated. Along with the contracts, grower participants will receive a link to a survey for their project's three-year historical data. Initial payments will be released following execution of the contracts and completion of the historical data reporting.

For any questions or more information, reach out to Program Manager Tamara Wood at 863-698-9276 or [tamara@craftfdn.org](mailto:tamara@craftfdn.org), or contact Assistant Program Manager Tina Buice at 863-214-3731 or [tina@craftfdn.org](mailto:tina@craftfdn.org).



# Brassinosteroids Can Improve Juice Quality and Fruit Yield

By Fernando Alferez and Divya Aryal

There are some indications that brassinosteroids (Brs) may advance commercial internal maturity by almost one month in Valencia sweet orange, depending on the time of application.

Brassinosteroids applied in March had a greater effect on Valencia yield than a January application. However, the best time of application in this variety and other sweet orange varieties like Hamlin still needs to be determined, so that this treatment can become economically feasible.

UF/IFAS researchers are working to determine how Br treatment influences internal maturity in Hamlin and Valencia sweet orange varieties during fruit maturation. The goal is to find the ideal maturation stage for applying the hormone and to obtain the best sugar-to-acid ratio.

Research results for the first season show that in Hamlin, Br application improved internal fruit quality by increasing sugar/acid ratio in juice from 9 to 12 by early December. A higher fructose content was also found in juice from Br-treated fruit. Brs induce accumulation of certain sugars in the juice. The brassinosteroid was applied by foliar spray in late November, and growers saw the effect in January.

In Valencia fruit, by harvesting in March, Brix in controls was 8.5, whereas in Br-treated fruit it was 9.4. An increase in Valencia yield, between 9% and 29% depending on the time of application, was also found after Br treatment. The best timing to achieve maximum results appears to be closer to harvesting, but this needs to be confirmed.

*Fernando Alferez (alferez@ufl.edu) is an assistant professor, and Divya Aryal is a research graduate assistant, both at the UF/IFAS SWFREC in Immokalee.*



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# Strong Support for Plant Transformation Center

The Florida Citrus Commission (FCC) recently approved almost \$1.05 million to support the University of Florida Plant Transformation Center that will develop methodologies and technologies to improve HLB resistance and tolerance in citrus.

Eric Triplett, chair of the UF/IFAS Microbiology and Cell Science Department, founded the center as a cornerstone to get HLB-tolerant cultivars to growers faster. He stated: “We’ve long recognized that breeding is the Swiss Army knife of agricultural science. With the right genetic crop modifications, we can solve almost any challenge in growing food. The center will allow us to much more effectively employ biotechnology tools to increase the speed and accuracy of our plant breeding,” said Scott Angle, UF’s interim provost and senior vice president for agriculture and natural resources, who has for the past three months been meeting with citrus industry leaders to garner support and input on goals for the center.”

For the first few years, the center will be mostly or solely focused on citrus, Scott Angle, UF senior vice president for agriculture and natural resources, who oversees UF/IFAS said. But in the long run, the plan is to get some of the problems with HLB resolved and then start thinking about other citrus problems as well as other crop problems.

“There are over 300 crops grown in Florida and all could use a bit of transformation to make them more resistant to diseases and pests, improve their quality and improve their flavor,” said Angle.

Angle added that as science, technology and the needs of the industry have changed over the years, now is the right time for the Plant Transformation Center. UF has been working closely with the industry for some time to get the center going.

UF President Ben Sasse committed \$2 million to jumpstart the Plant Transformation Center project, Angle reported. The Citrus Research and Development Foundation has also pledged support. UF has met with Florida Sen. Ben Albritton regarding long-term funding. Additionally, UF is considering redirecting some internal funds within UF/IFAS that could be dedicated toward building greenhouses for the center.

The center objectives include:

- Developing rapid genome improvements for citrus
- Leveraging artificial intelligence to discover new gene functions to identify targets for genetic modification
- Use clear communication and engagement with regulatory agencies to increase the transparency of the approval process
- Infuse social science to ensure rapid adoption of new technologies among growers and the public
- Effectively communicate to the public

Work will be done at both the UF campus in Gainesville and the UF/IFAS Citrus Research and Education Center in Lake Alfred, Angle said.

# 2023-2024 Florida Department of Citrus Budget

The Florida Citrus Commission (FCC) met on October 25<sup>th</sup> and amongst other action, took action on the upcoming 2023-2024 Florida Department of Citrus (FDOC) budget and grower assessment rates.

The FDOC budget has been set at \$23.239 million, about \$6.5 million less than the 2022-2023 budget of \$29.795 million. It includes administrative and support services of \$2.153 million, a general revenue service charge of \$222,000, a research budget of \$5.643 million and a marketing budget of \$14.677 million. Reserves will be \$544,000. The primary area of reduction in the budget was in marketing due to a decrease in State of Florida general revenue funding for that activity and a shift towards more research funding.

The grower assessment rates per box of fruit are unchanged from last year at:

- Fresh orange: 5 cents
- Processed and fresh grapefruit: 7 cents
- Processed and fresh specialty fruit: 7 cents
- Processed orange juice: 12 cents

Marketing plans for the 2023–24 season were also outlined at the Oct. 25 FCC meeting. Karmen Johnson of marketing firm Edible said the plans are aimed at increasing consumer awareness of Florida orange juice and driving sales. This will be done through an integrated marketing and public relations program. The messaging pillars remain the nutritional benefits of Florida orange juice and the Florida difference.

In recent years, the FDOC has used primarily social media to reach its target audience. Television was the agency’s primary marketing medium for many decades, but reduced crops and budgets no longer provide enough funding for effective television campaigns. Meredith Nelson of Edible said artificial intelligence (AI) is changing the way consumers search for content and will change the way consumers shop in the near future. Being able to integrate AI into the FDOC marketing campaign will help in remaining relevant with its audience, she said.



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# Winter Weather Watch

The 2023-24 edition of the Polk County Extension Winter Weather Watch program will begin on November 15, 2023. The program provides growers with winter weather forecast information specifically geared toward agricultural interests in West Central and Southwest Florida. The program provides subscribers with an unlisted phone number for (24 hour/7 days a week) access to daily weather forecasts.

The zone forecasts are from the National Weather Service (NWS) and are listed on the automated phone menu, so you can select the products you are interested in. Forecasts include the zone forecasts, 6-10 and 8-14 day outlook forecasts. In addition to the forecasts there are special weather narratives provided as needed in the event of freezing temperatures and a weekly outlook provided by meteorologist David Fayash.

When freezing temperatures are predicted in our area additional updates will include the afternoon zone forecast and the modified sunset brunt minimum temperature equation. In addition, the program also provides the weekly citrus leaf freezing temperatures.

Subscriptions for the Winter Weather Watch program are only \$100.00 for the entire 4 month period (Nov 15 to Mar 15). You can subscribe to the Winter Weather Watch by contacting Joy Spencer at 863-519-1041 or [j.spencer@ufl.edu](mailto:j.spencer@ufl.edu) or by sending in the subscription info below:

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# Late Fall Production Notes

As we are now in November, growers should to start think about the prospect of the potentially adverse conditions that winter can bring. So do not get caught off guard by delaying your winter preparations. There are a few measures that growers can undertake to better prepare for cold weather, and now is a good time to start your planning.

Beginning with the basics, fuel tanks for irrigation pumps should be checked and maintained at levels which allow you to run them for at least several consecutive days. Bear in mind that the fuel companies will be scrambling to facilitate service to everyone at the same time if conditions deteriorate.

Horticulturally, where microjet irrigation will be utilized for frost/freeze protection, the jets should be re-positioned in order for water to be sprayed in a manner which will allow for ice to be formed in the crotch of trees 3 years or younger. Other jets should be checked thoroughly and rechecked throughout the winter. Proper placement and maintenance is essential for the effective use of a micro-sprinkler system as a cold protection tool.

Other winter preparations or checklist items that should be undertaken at this time should include things such as:

- Checking your thermometers for accuracy and that they are mounted correctly.
- Determining what your forecast tracking options are and at what temperatures you are going to initiate frost protection action.
- Maintaining clean water filters at irrigation pumps.
- Making sure that you are prepared during the day for what might happen at night; checking the fuel, oil, and water levels in pump motors.
- Double checking that all grove vehicles and employees are properly outfitted or equipped with the necessary clothing, parts, flashlights, necessary tools for cranking engines and maintaining irrigation systems on cold nights, jumper cables, extra irrigation parts, etc.
- Having working middles mowed or disced to enable adequate airflow on cold nights.
- Making sure that any lingering weed or grass presence within the tree row does not affect sprinkler coverage patterns.
- Making sure to turn off automatic timers to keep electric pumps from turning on after jets may be frozen in the case of a marginal freeze.
- Keeping in touch with various winter weather watch sources, such as AgNet Media, FAWN, the Winter Weather Watch Program, the National Weather Service, the HCCGA office, etc.
- Having a cooperative temperature watch and notification plan with fellow growers.
- Making sure that you record flow meter readings in advance of and after any cold protection pumpage.

Growers should consider developing a checklist of items to think about at the time of a potential freeze. With the reduced work force that most operations face nowadays getting prepared early is important! As we rapidly approach the time of the year that could start to bring about potential cold snaps it is important for growers to constantly review their plan of action in the event of a possible freeze occurrence. Being well prepared may be the key to not only helping your grove be protected from a freeze event, but doing it as efficiently and economically as possible.

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HCCGA produces our monthly newsletter at the completion of each month, and it is published shortly thereafter. The ads you see in this newsletter are what make it possible for it to be produced and distributed, both in hard copy and electronically. In addition to our membership mailing list, the newsletter is also sent to our entire electronic contact list, which includes firms associated with other agricultural enterprises across our region and is archived for at least one year on the Association's Website: [www.hccga.com](http://www.hccga.com).

If you would like more information about how to advertise with the Association, or would like to place an ad insertion order, contact Ray or Jan at the HCCGA office. Below are our advertising rates:

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# 2023–2024 Citrus Production Guide

The 2023–2024 Citrus Production Guide is now available to growers. The University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) publication includes the latest technical advice on HLB management, tree nutrition, grove management and other aspects of Florida citrus cultivation. The guide is a comprehensive reference meant to assist growers in development and management of citrus groves in Florida, said Tripti Vashisth, a UF/IFAS horticulture associate professor and a member of the guide's editorial team.

Additions this year include new fertilizer recommendations for some nutrients that have been recently changed and information on the plant growth regulator gibberellic acid. Information on pesticides registered for use in Florida citrus is also updated in every new edition.

Topics covered in the guide include planting, irrigation, fertilization, weed control, insect management and disease management. For a grove management practice to be recommended in the guide, a minimum of two years of field-validated data is required. About 50 UF/IFAS personnel contributed to the latest edition.

"Each year, we update the guide with new information as it becomes available," Vashisth said. "This is a fundamental component of the UF/IFAS faculty mission to continue to meet the needs of our growers as we learn about and/or develop new tools and strategies for citrus production."

Hard copies of the updated production guide are available at local UF/IFAS Extension offices in citrus-growing counties and at the UF/IFAS CREC in Lake Alfred. The guides are also available online at: [https://crec.ifas.ufl.edu/resources/production-guide\\_](https://crec.ifas.ufl.edu/resources/production-guide_)

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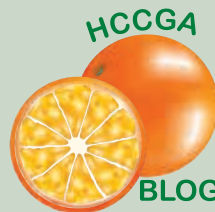
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Wheeler Brothers, Inc.  
Wicks, Brown, Williams and Co., CPAs  
Yara North America, Inc.



# Informational Websites

## **FDOC Grower Website**

The Florida Department of Citrus website at: [www.FDOCGrower.com](http://www.FDOCGrower.com). is in place to provide growers with relevant information about the citrus industry. FDOC Grower features timely information about economic and market research, scientific updates, marketing activities and Florida Citrus Commission meetings in an easy-to-navigate format.

## **2022-2023 Florida Citrus Production Guides**

The 2022-2023 Florida Citrus Production Guides are available online (with printable sections) at: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/cg101>.

## **HLB Nutrient Management Web Site**

Some HLB nutrient management information to accompany the HLB Guidance document has been put on the CREC website at: <http://www.crec.ifas.ufl.edu/extension/greening/index.shtml>.

## **CREC Citrus Industry Update**

The UF/IFAS Citrus Industry Update can be found on the CREC website: [www.crec.ifas.ufl.edu](http://www.crec.ifas.ufl.edu). These informational newsletters can be located in the publications area. Growers that would like to be added to the e-mail distribution list can do so by contacting the CREC staff at: [cankergreeningupdates@crec.ifas.ufl.edu](mailto:cankergreeningupdates@crec.ifas.ufl.edu).

## **Black Spot Info**

Information about citrus black spot is available on the Lake Alfred CREC website at: [www.crec.ifas.ufl.edu/extension/black\\_spot/citrus\\_black\\_spot.htm](http://www.crec.ifas.ufl.edu/extension/black_spot/citrus_black_spot.htm)

## **Citrus Research & Education Center Lake Alfred**

[www.crec.ifas.ufl.edu](http://www.crec.ifas.ufl.edu).

## **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>

## **South Florida Water Management District**

[www.sfwmd.gov](http://www.sfwmd.gov).

## **Safe Fruits & Veggies Website**

The Alliance for Food and Farming (AFF) was formed in 1989 to represent farmers of fruit and vegetables. The information on their website linked below was developed in conjunction with experts in the fields of toxicology, risk analysis, nutrition, health and farming to demonstrate how safe the food supply raised by Americans farmers is for the consuming public. You should consider utilizing facts and videos from this website in social media posts to help promote agricultural products to the general public. <https://www.safefruitsandveggies.com>

## **CRDF Website**

The Citrus Research and Development Foundation (CRDF) has a renovated website designed to make it easier for users to find information on research projects. For the latest in cutting edge citrus disease research information: [www.citrusrdf.org](http://www.citrusrdf.org).

## **Research Updates Website**

There is a website that provides a venue where you can check on all ongoing citrus related research. Each research project has a brief synopsis of what is happening so far, who is funding it, who the researchers are, etc. The site also provides a wide range of other updated information from UF/IFAS. So check out <http://citrusresearch.ifas.ufl.edu>.

## **Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services**

<http://www.freshfromflorida.com>

## **University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences**

[www.ifas.ufl.edu](http://www.ifas.ufl.edu).

## **Indian River Research and Education Center, Ft. Pierce**

<http://irrec.ifas.ufl.edu>.

## **United States Horticultural Research Laboratory, Ft. Pierce**

[http://www.ars.usda.gov/main/site\\_main.htm?modecode=66-18-00-00](http://www.ars.usda.gov/main/site_main.htm?modecode=66-18-00-00)

## **Florida Citrus Extension Agents Web Site**

This web site: <http://citrusagents.ifas.ufl.edu> has been developed to help growers' access information from around the citrus industry. You are able to read their citrus newsletters, learn about scheduled meetings, and disseminate information across the citrus industry.



## **Highlands County Extension Web Site**

This web site: <http://highlands.ifas.ufl.edu> was developed and is managed right here in Highlands County. It contains a wealth of information, and links to even more information. You will find local extension citrus meeting announcements, registration information, etc.

## **IFAS EDIS/IFAS Solutions for Life sites**

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu> and <http://solutionsforyourlife.com>, for a plethora of information on citrus and other types of agriculture.

## **Soil and Leaf Tissue Testing**

Information about techniques associated with soil and leaf tissue testing at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ss531>.

## **Citrus Nutrition**

For information on citrus nutrition, you can consult "Nutrition of Florida Citrus Trees" by Drs. Obreza and Morgan. The entire publication can be viewed at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ss478>.

## **FDOC Greening Research Updates**

The latest greening research information can be viewed online at: <http://www.floridacitrus.org/oj/?s=greening>

## **FASS Reports**

Florida Agricultural Statistics Service (FASS) Reports. [https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics\\_by\\_State/Florida/](https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Florida/).

## **USDA Citrus Crop Update Website**

The USDA adjusts the citrus crop estimate on a monthly basis. Get the latest citrus crop estimate updates at: [https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics\\_by\\_State/Florida/Publications/Citrus/index](https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Florida/Publications/Citrus/index)

## **Southeast AgNet**

Daily Ag news posts, audio clips and updates, including citrus news, from the state's only farm broadcast service. They Tweet and provide RSS feeds too. [www.southeastagnet.com](http://www.southeastagnet.com)

## **Citrus Industry Magazine**

Citrus Industry Magazine has been a grower and industry favorite for 90 years. CEU Credit articles are now available on-line here with several scheduled to appear throughout the year. [www.citrusindustry.net](http://www.citrusindustry.net).

## **Low Volume Spray Application Techniques**

Information from the Low Volume Spray Program series can be found online at: [http://citrusagents.ifas.ufl.edu/events/PDF/LowVolumeApplication/LVA\\_program.htm](http://citrusagents.ifas.ufl.edu/events/PDF/LowVolumeApplication/LVA_program.htm) The information includes currently labeled products for low volume application (2-5 gallons per acre), worker safety, application considerations and factors affecting application success.

## **SWFWMD Permit Info**

You can search for SWFWMD pending permits (by application number, project name, or by county) or sign up for electronic notification of application requests at <http://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us>. Click on the E-Permitting link on the Features List. Click the following link for access: <http://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/permits/>

## **OSHA's Agricultural Website**

This link is to OSHA's agricultural web page. <https://www.osha.gov/dsg/topics/agriculturaloperations/index.html>

## **Florida Citrus Mutual**

<http://flcitrusmutual.com>.

## **Florida Farm Bureau**

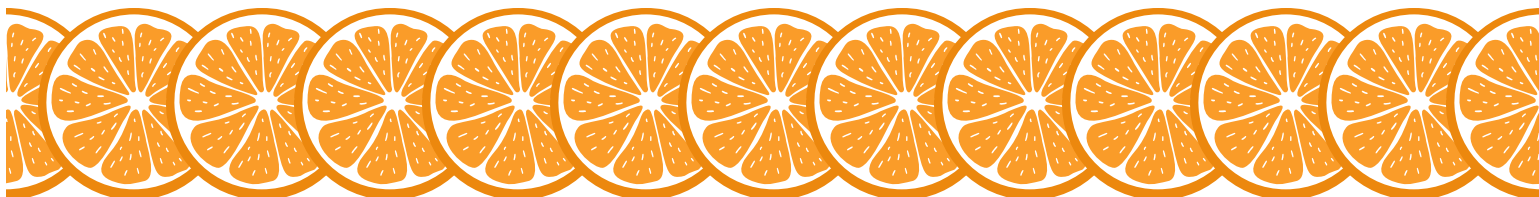
[www.floridafarmbureau.org](http://www.floridafarmbureau.org).

## **FAWN**

The Florida Automated Weather Network (FAWN) can be accessed on the web at: <http://fawn.ifas.ufl.edu>

## **Weather Underground**

[www.wunderground.com](http://www.wunderground.com)







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## Cutting Edge Nutrition & Crop Protection for Trees Impacted by Citrus HLB

BRANDT, a leading provider of specialty inputs, offers a wide range of proprietary nutrition and crop protection products. The following products are recommended to help treat trees that have been impacted by Citrus HLB.

### Spring Pre-Bloom through Post-Bloom Sprays: Foliar Feed with Boron, Calcium and Magnesium

- **BRANDT® Manni-Plex® Cal-Mag** - high efficiency foliar calcium/magnesium
- **BRANDT Manni-Plex for Citrus** - high efficiency foliar nutrient combo for citrus
- **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

*For more information, contact J.R. Gough at  
[Jr.Gough@brandt.co](mailto:Jr.Gough@brandt.co) or 863 781 0363*