

Citrus connection



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

The beginning of a new year is a time to reflect on the previous 365 days as well as look forward to what's to come. Looking back on 2023, a lot has happened.

Last January we saw a freeze as well as the first commercially available formulations of trunk injectable OTC hitting the market. During the springtime, we were all full throttle on figuring out trunk injections. We also had a very warm, dry spring. The hot, dry weather continued into the summer where it seemed like we set a record high every week. On top of the heat, many areas of the state, including Highlands County, had and still have today, huge rainfall deficits. Late summer and early fall finally brought some much-needed rain, however, not enough to make up the deficits. At the start of fall, many of us felt pretty good about the crop of earlies. OTC seemed to be doing its job and the fruit wasn't dropping as early as years past. Some of those good feelings began to change once harvesting began and fruit drop, size and fruit quality again became issues.

All these things made the year 2023 a challenging growing season. Compounding these difficulties was the fact that last year, our groves were still recovering from Hurricane Ian in 2022. On a positive note, so far this winter, the El Nino weather pattern that has set in has provided some welcome rain and has so far kept freezing temperatures at bay.

As I said earlier, a new year isn't only for reflecting on the previous year but also to look forward to the next. There's a lot to be optimistic about in 2024. Even though the overall results we saw from the first year of OTC injections left something to be desired, I'm hopeful that year two will move the needle in the right direction. The general consensus about OTC is that it will take a few years to make a noticeable difference. We've learned a great deal about, although not everything, about how to accomplish trunk injections in an effective and efficient way. We aren't starting from scratch like last year.

Our trees are in much better condition going into 2024 than they were in 2023. Healthier groves with more foliage are primed to respond to a second year of OTC injections. That's my hope for 2024. Happy New Year!

**DEC
2023**

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Aaron Nelson



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2024 Calendar of Events

March 7

HCCGA Annual Meeting & Dinner @ Seven-Sebring Raceway Hotel @ 5:30

June 12-14

Annual Citrus Conference @ Bonita Springs

December 14

HCCGA Citrus Fun Shoot

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



I hope that all of our members had a wonderful and joy filled holiday season with your family and friends. Hopefully this New Year will eventually bring us, our industry and our country a better year than 2023. I completely understand that we are all tired of hearing about perseverance, but for those of you invested in the future of our industry – thank you for that resolve.

Please take notice in this issue of all of the folks that either shot pretty well or won some of the great prizes in our Association's largest networking and fundraising event, our annual Citrus Fun Shoot. We had a great 2023 shoot at OK Corral Gun Club, and hope you will save the date of Saturday, December 14th for our 2024 Citrus Fun Shoot.

Hopefully many of you will be able to join us for the 2024 HCCGA Annual Meeting that is scheduled for the evening of Thursday, March 7th. An HCCGA Annual Meeting Invitation and Reservation/Sponsorship Form will go out in the mail relatively soon. We look forward to hopefully seeing you at the Seven - Sebring Raceway Hotel for a nice evening of industry fellowship.

At the Annual Meeting, membership will be asked to elect some new Board of Directors members. If a grower member would like to nominate another grower member, or themselves, for consideration for Board service – just let me know in the next couple of weeks.

I strongly encourage all growers to consider contacting Tom Andrews (863-402-6866) at the Highlands County Property Appraiser's office in the coming weeks. It is important that the most up-to-date information on your grove properties is shared with that office on an annual basis. Your individual records can make a significant difference in your property's appraisal – so it is critical that they have accurate records for each grove block.

In a similar vein, our grower members should plan to make at least annual visits to, or contact with, two other governmental agency offices; the USDA Farm Services Agency (FSA) office in Okeechobee and the Highlands Soil and Water Conservation District (HSWCD) office at the Bert Harris Ag Center. All three of these entities need to have the most up-to-date records available for all of your agricultural operations. Not only is there an opportunity to potentially save some tax dollars after visiting the Property Appraiser's office, there may very well be cost share or direct benefit types of programs for your various agricultural enterprises to take advantage of that the folks at FSA or HSWCD will make you aware of.

Finally, all Association members should have received their 2024 membership renewal dues notices in mid December. The collective voice of our members is truly an amazing force that demands consideration in a wide range of issue deliberations or individual entity assistance, so your continued support is both appreciated and needed. The renewal response has been very strong so far, but if you have any questions about your membership or don't think you received a membership renewal invoice, don't hesitate in giving us a call at the HCCGA office.

Our goal is to keep our members as informed as possible on a wide range of issues, so please never hesitate in contacting me day or night (cell 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 that if you are not getting regular e-mail updates from us, then we either do not have a good e-mail address for you or your system is blocking receipt of e-mails from the RackSpace domain (our e-mail management system) – so please let us know right away.

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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Save the Date for the 2024 Florida Citrus Show



The Florida Citrus Show is scheduled for April 3, 2024. Mark your calendar now to join citrus industry peers for another great event.

Last year, a refreshed format brought new life to the show. It moved and was co-hosted at the University of Florida Indian River Research and Education Center and the U.S. Department of Agriculture-Agricultural Research Service U.S. Horticultural Research Laboratory in Fort Pierce.

The neighboring facilities made for a perfect venue, and the event will be held there again this year.

The trade show will be a tailgate gathering, like last year, which was a big hit with attendees. Exhibitors will be serving a variety of foods to growers during the lunch break.

As always, the Florida Citrus Show will present educational seminars on the latest citrus and specialty crop research. Registration will be opening soon. Stay tuned for more details on the event.



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CRAFT Program Updates

With the November 30th closure of the New Tree Plantings Cycle Five application window, CRAFT received more than 175 additional applications for inclusion in the program. Of those applications 18 were for solid set projects featuring plant material from the Program for Expedited Propagation (PEP), 57 were traditional solid set projects and 100 were reset applications. In addition to these newly submitted applications, projects that were submitted but not approved in Cycle Four were automatically rolled over for consideration and bring the total to 210 applications. All told, more than 14,000 acres worth of new planting proposals will be considered by the CRAFT Technical Working Group (TWG) and Board of Directors for funding in Cycle Five.

CRAFT Scientific Coordinator Carisa Keller and the rest of the CRAFT staff are now working to organize the applications and begin the review process. In the coming weeks, you will meet (via Zoom) with Carisa and, if needed, a representative from the TWG to discuss your proposed project and to develop an experimental design. Once you and the CRAFT team have created a mutually agreeable design, it will be presented to the full TWG for their consideration. At that point it will either be recommended to the Board of Directors for approval or moved to the waitlist.



This process can take a bit of time, especially with more than 200 applications. In an effort to expedite the process, Carisa will reach out to you to schedule a time to review all of your applications at once. Please be on the lookout for contact from her in the coming days.

Existing Tree Therapies Round Two Grower Agreements Mailed Out

Speaking of patience, Existing Tree Therapies Round Two participation agreements have been finalized and released through the US Postal Service. If participants have not received their agreements, please email Tamara Wood at tamara@craftfdn.org so that a new copy can be sent to you as soon as possible.

Included in the package that participants will receive is a cover letter with instructions regarding next steps and payment processes. Participants are asked to read that letter carefully before signing and returning agreements.

If growers have any questions regarding the CRAFT programs, please don't hesitate to contact Program Manager Tamara Wood at tamara@craftfdn.org or 863.698.9276.



Highlands Youth Citrus Project

Valencia Trees

The Highlands County Fair is February 2-10, 2024. As fair season is approaching, 80 Highlands Youth Citrus Project exhibitors are getting their citrus trees ready for display and sale at the Highlands County Fair. This year, exhibitors have been raising Valencia on rootstock 942 trees since April of 2023. All of the citrus trees for sale have been grown entirely in Tree Defender IPCs, and will be PCR tested for HLB prior to sale.

During the Highlands County Fair, each tree will be set up with a clipboard with a minimum bid of \$50. The Grand Champion and Reserve Grand Champion citrus tree will be sold during the livestock live auction beginning at 6:00 PM on Thursday, February 8, 2024.

Your potential support of the 2024 Highlands Youth Citrus Project will be greatly appreciated by 4-H members. If you have any questions about the Highlands County 4-H Program or Highlands Youth Citrus Project, please contact Alexis Cooper at the 4-H Office at (863) 402-6540.



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2024 Citrus Hall of Fame Inductees

The Selection Committee for The Florida Citrus Hall of Fame has announced the selection of **Dr. Robert M. “Bob” Behr**, of New Smyrna Beach, Fla., **George H. Streetman**, of Vero Beach, and **Leland K. Young**, formerly of Bartow, Fla. as the Class of 2024 inductees. The three distinguished leaders will be inducted into the Hall of Fame along with the Class of 2023, **Gilbert Bowen** (deceased), of Winter Haven, Fla. and **A.G. Smith** (deceased), of Wauchula, Fla., on March 1, 2024

at Florida Southern College in Lakeland, at the George W. Jenkins Fieldhouse. The event is co-sponsored by Florida Citrus Mutual and the Florida Department of Citrus, with the Florida Citrus Processors Association hosting the OJ Meet & Greet afterwards. Tickets are available on the website.



Dr. Robert M. “Bob” Behr

Bob Behr's roots run deep in Florida soil and so does his connection to the citrus industry, which spanned over four decades. Born in Orlando, Florida, his professional journey in the citrus industry began in 1987 with the Florida Department of Citrus where he served as the Economics/Market Research Director. His acumen in economics was very strong, but it was his ability to translate that knowledge into usable information for growers, processors, brands, and whomever was interested that made an impact. He joined Citrus World (now Florida's Natural) in 1994, eventually graduating to CEO in 2015 until he retired in December 2022. Bob has been instrumental in the fight against citrus greening, championing the use of Citrus Under Protective Screen (CUPS) systems and personally maintaining considerable plantings within CUPS. His efforts earned him the Citrus Achievement Award in 2019 for the tree planting initiative program (PIP) at Florida's Natural, resulting in the planting of 1.4 million trees. A grower himself, he was able to make decisions with the best interest of member-growers in mind, in the finest cooperative tradition. He was a member of the Florida Citrus Commission and was the go-to guy assisting Florida Citrus Mutual with many issues facing the industry, leading the fight against Brazil in an anti-dumping case against imported orange juice. His leadership role resulted in the U.S. Federal Trade Commission taking punitive measures against Brazilian processors, putting hundreds of thousands of "Byrd Amendment" dollars back into the hands of Florida producers while ensuring grower returns accurately reflected the market. His strategic decisions and vision significantly influenced policies and practices that have fostered the growth and stability of the Florida citrus industry.

See HALL OF FAME on page 9

HALL OF FAME, Con't from page 8

George H. Streetman

George Streetman has exemplified leadership in the fresh citrus segment for decades. He emerged from a family farming in the Indian River area since 1935 to build a successful packing, shipping, and grapefruit export business. During his career, he served as president and General Manager of Hogan & Sons, where he was instrumental in the development of size regulations that helped maintain a profitable and orderly market during periods of oversupply. He served on the Florida Citrus Commission from 2005-2011, was on the International Marketing Committee from 2005- 2008, serving as Vice Chair 2008-2010, and as Chair from 2010-2011. In 2015, he was awarded the "Legend of the River" award, the highest recognition from the Indian River Citrus League. In addition, he served on the inaugural Board of Directors for New Varieties Development & Management Corp., chaired the Citrus Administrative Committee overseeing a federal marketing order for fresh Florida citrus and served as President of Florida Citrus Packers from 2003-2005. A longtime Member of Indian River Citrus League, George Streetman's many contributions to the Florida Citrus Industry equate to leadership in action. He was well respected not only for his vision, but his ability to work closely with state and federal agencies to develop regulatory programs that were practical, effective and complementary of commercial practices. He has a reputation of being innovative, reliable, industrious, fun loving, gracious, ethical and tenacious. But perhaps more than anything George represented the industry with dignity and strength.

Leland K. Young

Representative of the men that built the citrus industry, "when hard work was currency," Leland K. Young was born the son of a sharecropper and started working in the groves as a young boy. He worked for Kraft Foods and Evans Packing before starting his own company, Peace Valley Enterprises, which became a large, thriving family citrus business caretaking his own groves and those of many others in South Polk County. He was the epitome of a pioneer and an innovator, buying a plastics injection mold machine in the early '80s, hiring an engineer, and manufacturing the first low volume emitters, eventually becoming MaxiJet, Inc. and the industry norm. Always collaborative, Leland often worked with chemical companies on field trials, most significantly participating in the trials for the eradication of the Diaprepes Root Weevil. He was a loyal dedicated member of Haines City Citrus Growers Association and Florida's Natural Growers, a member of Florida Citrus Mutual, Florida Farm Bureau, and Farm Credit of Central Florida. He generously shared his workspace – "The Barn" – with the entire industry for numerous large industry events, fund raisers, Miss Florida Citrus promotions and political campaigns, providing a vehicle for millions of dollars to be raised for charity and citrus and ag-centric politicians. A true ambassador for the citrus industry, he had an uncanny ability to bring people together regardless of their station in life, and worked constantly behind the scenes to bring everyone together for the betterment of the Florida citrus industry.

See HALL OF FAME on page 10

HALL OF FAME, Con't from page 9

Class of 2023 Inductees recap:

For more than seven decades **Franklin Gilbert Bowen** (1928 – 2022) was a leader, not only in his family's operations but in the Florida citrus industry. An avid learner, he traveled worldwide to keep abreast of new innovations in the citrus industry and always shared that knowledge with others. He selflessly and generously helped countless growers and others with their success in the industry, including funding research which helped bring low volume micro-jet irrigation to Florida.

Alfred Graham Smith (1862 – 1942) was a pioneer citrus grower in Wauchula and was instrumental in the early growth of the citrus industry in Florida, primarily in what at that time was DeSoto County. He was one of oldest growers and shippers of citrus in Florida and, in 1888, he was the first grower to ship citrus via railroad from Wauchula, building his first packinghouse there in 1896. In 1909, he was part of the group that traveled to California with Dr. Fredrick W. Inman and 48 others to study citrus cooperative marketing and growing methods in California, which resulted in the establishment of the Florida Citrus Exchange.

The Florida Citrus Hall of Fame honors distinguished leaders who have made significant contributions to the Florida citrus industry. The Citrus Hall of Fame display and Archives Center is located within the Sarah D. and L. Kirk McKay, Jr. Archives Center at Florida Southern College in Lakeland. For tickets to the luncheon, visit www.FloridaCitrusHallofFame.com, which includes access to biographies and photos on all members, noting their accomplishments, as well as numerous Oral History Videos with longtime industry members.

For more information, contact Brenda Eubanks Burnette at (561) 351-4314 or via email at Brenda@BurnetteandAssociates.com.

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


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

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

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

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

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

ker management programs. We also support the regional tradeshows, conferences, and various associations throughout the state all year long. If you see us at a show, make sure to stop by and say hello! 



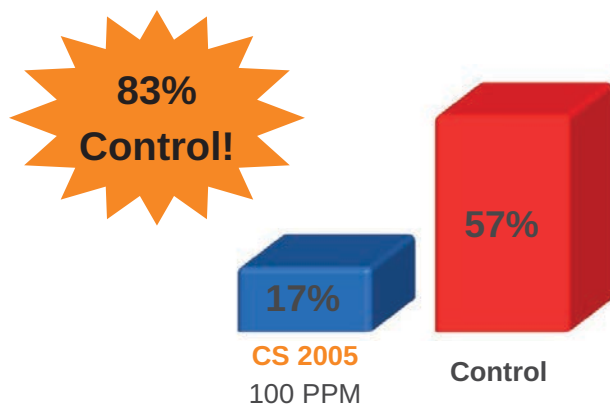
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HCCGA Membership Dues

HCCGA members should receive their 2024 membership dues renewal statements in the mail in mid-December. If you did not receive your renewal invoice, or have questions about your membership; please contact the HCCGA office (863) 385-8091 at your earliest convenience.

Both Grower and Associate dues for 2024 remained the same as previous years (as a *matter of fact, they are the same as they were when HCCGA was founded in 1990*). Grower dues are \$2.00 per acre with a minimum of \$100.00 and a maximum of \$2,000.00 and Associate dues are only \$100.00 per year.

Prudent budgeting by your HCCGA Board of Directors, nearly 100% membership renewal from year to year and additional support of several Association social and fundraising events through the year have allowed your Association to keep the dues at this low level for the past 30 plus years.



Thank you again for your membership and support in the past, and we look forward to working on your behalf in 2024.



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2023 Citrus Fun Shoot

The 26th Annual HCCGA Citrus Fun Shoot took place on Saturday, December 9th at OK Corral Gun Club and featured some pretty darn fine shooting, good food, and absolutely tremendous fellowship. This year's shoot had another great crowd of shooters with 286 men, women and young people taking to the two courses at OK Corral, and another 20 plus joining us for a great prime rib and seafood luncheon.

The day started off with some tasty **Natalie's** juice and every shooter receiving a very nice shooting towel courtesy of **Quality Roofing & Sheet Metal**. After a great morning of shooting and outdoor fellowship, the group enjoyed a very tasty lunch sponsored by **Farm Credit of Florida** of Shrimp, Fish Dip, Sweet Corn and Prime Rib.

The fun shoot is always our Association's largest networking and fundraising event, so thanks again to all that participated, and for the wonderful sponsors that help make this such a great event. In this issue of the newsletter we want to share who some of the day's prize and event winners were. After lunch had been served, there were drawings for over 50 great raffle prizes including 5 guns that were won by **Ryan Leaphart, Hunter Snively, Deani Funk, Robert Larson & Kimberly Boney**

Our friends **HC Sheriff Paul Blackman, Bill Jarrett Ford, Quality Roofing & Sheet Metal, Harvey's Fertilizer** and **HC County Commissioner Chris Campbell** were our five **Green Bird Station Sponsors** - making some great prizes available for those contests. There were 10 lucky winners drawn from those who broke a "green bird" at one of the five stations on each course.

The folks at **Harvey's Fertilizer** sponsored two 4K Wi-Fi Apple TV's, which were won by **Terry Sturgell** and **Barry Keller**. Winning two Allen & Roth Fire Pits courtesy of **HC Sheriff Paul Blackman** were **Mike Whitney** and **Bob Isaly**. Our friends at **Quality Roofing & Sheet Metal** sponsored two Craftsman Trimmer & Blower Combo power tools, and those were won by **Vince Keller** and **Jim St. Clair**. Winning two Apple AirPods, courtesy of **Bill Jarret Ford** were **Clint Rucks** and **Jason Intoppe**. The final two green bird prizes, Stainless Steel Gas Patio Heaters, courtesy of **Highlands County Commissioner Chris Campbell**, went to **Vaughn Hathaway** and **Craig Skipper**.

In addition, **Sherry Sutphen/Roper, P.A.** sponsored the **Shooters Only Drawing** where another gun was drawn for and awarded to **Conner Kolshak**.

After the North vs. South Course shoot-off process involving 5 men who shot 99/100, the winner of the 2023 HCCGA Citrus Fun Shoot High Overall Individual Shooter Award was **Larry Williams**. The Individual Runner-up Award went to **David DeBrule**.

Bryan Holtkamp won the High Overall Youth Award (16 & younger) after a shoot off in that category, and the High Overall Ladies Award went to **Lynnette Thorstensen**, after that category's shoot off.

The High Overall Team, **Dunson Harvesting**, composed of **Les Dunson, Larry Williams, Nicole Williams** and **Wayne Smith** won the 3 team North vs. South course shoot-off. The **Griffin Fertilizer** team, with members **Landon Smoak, Will Cochlin, Matthew Hadden** and **Will Bernet** earned Runner-up honors after the shoot offs.

Live scoring updates, courtesy of **Florida Senator Ben Albritton**, were available during and after the shoot online for folks to access through their smart phones through our association with **Score Chaser** (www.scorechaser.com).

We are absolutely certain that everyone went home very well fed, and that almost everyone should be pretty darn proud of their shooting accomplishments, not to mention that many left with raffle or green bird prizes in their vehicles. So get on your calendar now and save the date of **Saturday, December 14, 2024** for the 2024 HCCGA Citrus Fun Shoot.

See photos on page 15

HCCGA Citrus Connection Newsletter Advertising

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.

So 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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Full Page - Full Color	\$ 300.00 - per month
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**** Third page and Business card size ads must be placed for a minimum of six months.**

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Dunson Harvesting
High Team



Lynette Thorstensen
Lady HOA

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Larry
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High Youth



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Team Runner Up



Ryan Leaphart
Raffle Gun
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2023

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Harvey's Fertilizer Awards
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2024 HCCGA Annual Meeting

The 34th Annual Meeting of the Highlands County Citrus Growers Association will be held at the Seven - Sebring Raceway Hotel on the evening of **Thursday, March 7th** with a social hour (cash bar) beginning at 5:30 PM and the dinner and program commencing at 6:30 PM.

During the dinner program, the Association will hear from guest speakers about the state of our industry, elect new Board of Directors members, thank departing directors, hear reports from Association officers, install the Board Officers for 2024 and recognize the major sponsors of our 2023 Golf Tournament and Sporting Clays Fun Shoot fundraisers.

All Association members should receive an invitation and reservation form in the mail relatively soon. The dinner will be open to all current 2024 grower and associate members who wish to attend; however advance **reservations are required**, so please return your reservation/ sponsorship forms as soon as possible after receiving your invitation

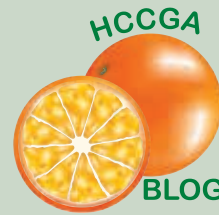
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For additional information, contact Tamara Wood - 863.698.9276 or tamara@craftfdn.org

UF/IFAS Flower Bud Induction Advisories



The 2023-2024 Flower Bud Advisories provided by Dr. Tripti Vashisth (UF/IFAS CREC) have begun. These advisories will be published biweekly until March 30, 2024. Growers can utilize this information to better understand and predict the timing of flowering for the upcoming season. The advisories can be found at: <https://crec.ifas.ufl.edu/research/citrus-production/flower-bud-induction/>.

The information is based on the Citrus Flowering Monitor, which is a model that uses area FAWN stations, cultivar type, tree age, soil type and the current date to give predictions of when flowering is expected to occur and how many bloom events to expect. The model shows the flower bud induction levels from October through April.

Trees begin to accumulate induction hours as cooler weather at temperatures below 68 degrees occur. During the late fall and early winter bud differentiation occurs, which means the citrus buds will sprout as either flowers or vegetative growth. Warm spells that occur intermittently during times in which we typically encounter cold weather can induce bud initiation resulting in multiple bloom events. Therefore, it is important for growers throughout the fall and winter to track how many induction hours the trees have accumulated and monitor weather forecasts for potential warm periods.

Growers can enter parameters specific to their grove to get a prediction. Knowing the bloom date is important for managing bloom and other related events. The Citrus Flowering Monitor also gives specific recommendations on how to manage bloom. You can also run the Flowering Monitor utilizing your own site specific information. The model is available at: <http://disc.ifas.ufl.edu/bloom/model.jsp>.

Growers should pay attention to flower bud advisories because they discuss the predicted bloom and best practices to follow at that time of year for optimum flowering. Keep track of induction hours in your area and watch for projected warm periods from the weather services.

Growers are encouraged to critically assess their problems in regard to flowering before applying any strategies. For example, the goal may be to reduce flowering in a variety that flowers excessively and the fruit remains small, or it may be to suppress flowering where tree canopy is sparse and excessive fruit drop occurs. In such cases, a gibberellic acid (GA) application during a low to moderate flower bud induction period is recommended.

Normal, healthy trees could have their induction boosted by applying some drought stress. Unfortunately, with vulnerable root systems associated with HLB, growers shouldn't risk heavier preharvest fruit drop of the current crop by using water stress to prevent unwanted early vegetative growth and enhance induction of flowers. Starting this year, each advisory will carry additional recommendations regarding use of GA to manipulate flowering.

The information provided by these two modeling resources can also be used by growers in their decision making processes about spray timing before flowering flushes and management of Post-Bloom Fruit Drop to reduce inoculum, especially during prolonged bloom periods and wet weather.

Farm TEAM Card

Commissioner of Agriculture Wilton Simpson has announced that farmers can apply for the Florida Farm Tax Exempt Agricultural Materials (TEAM) Card beginning January 1, 2024. The plastic wallet-sized Florida Farm TEAM Card is a physical alternative to the paper exemption certificates and aims to streamline the purchasing process for sales-tax-exempt agricultural materials, making it more convenient to purchase these materials tax-exempt. The card is free, and those interested in applying or learning more (*including what is exempt*) can visit: www.fdacs.gov/FarmTEAM.

How Does The Florida Farm TEAM Card Work?

The TEAM card does not expand or create agricultural exemptions beyond those provided in s. 212.08, F.S. A farmer whose real property is classified as agricultural pursuant to s. 193.461, F.S. – OR – A farmer who has implemented agricultural best management practices on property it owns or leases.

How long does the exemption approval last?

Unless an exemption is revoked by the DOR, each approved Card is good for five years before renewal is required.

How will stores/vendors verify Farm TEAM Cards?

Each card will have a URL or QR Code that will allow stores/vendors to verify Farm TEAM Cards quickly and easily.

Can stores/vendors make a copy of my card to keep on file for quick reference?

Yes, with cardholder permission. The card will not display sensitive data such as social security numbers or tax IDs. Cards will display the individual or corporate name and address. The tax exemption number is provided by DOR.

How many cards may I request under a single entity?

FDACS will provide up to 10 cards. Each card will contain the individual business or corporate name and address. Cards will not name individual cardholders.

Will online vendors accept the TEAM Card Exemption?

User will have to follow the online vendor's procedures and any requirements, which may include submission of the Tax Exemption Certificate issued by DOR.

Who do I contact if I have questions?

FarmTEAMCard@FDACS.gov.



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2024 Highlands County Grove Property Appraisal

As we have now entered a new tax assessment year on January 1st, it is time for growers to make sure that the Highlands County Property Appraiser's office has the most up-to-date information on your grove properties just as soon as possible after the first of the year. Their office **will not** contact you, so it is incumbent upon each grower to make sure that the Appraiser's Office has the most up-to-date and accurate information about their grove properties as possible.

It would be extremely prudent for all growers to take the time to **annually update** your groves info with the Appraiser's office. Unplanted grove acreage and non-reset skip areas, due to concerns about HLB disease presence, are still entitled to the **de-minimis \$50.00 per acre assessed valuation**, so make sure they have that information from you.

Mr. McIntyre's office has always worked closely with our Association to fine tune assessment models in order to accurately reflect property values, and is happy to modify how property income calculations are utilized if the proper information is provided. Mr. McIntyre is encouraging growers to contact his Ag property staff in the Property Appraiser's office in order to discuss your updated information in order to have the most accurate long term grove appraisal models possible.

In order for growers to benefit from this process on an ongoing basis, it is critical that the Appraiser's office has complete and accurate information in areas such as net grove acreage, tree age category percentages, replacement tree and spacing numbers, significant pruning or topping, and/or tree removal (both numbers and age categories). Sharing your individualized production and harvesting records will allow the Appraiser's office to utilize those numbers in your assessment calculation instead of the default methodology involving statewide statistics.

If a grower wants to discuss in more detail how this type of information sharing may potentially benefit their operation prior to contacting Mr. McIntyre's office, contact Ray at the Association office.



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Winter Weather Watch

The 2023-24 edition of the Polk County Extension Winter Weather Watch program began 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 or by sending in the subscription info below:

2023 - 2024 Winter Weather Watch Program

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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/>.

We also have some copies at this time at the HCCGA office.

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- **Celite® 610** - mechanical insecticide that contains 100% diatomaceous earth, OMRI Listed

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

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- **BRANDT Smart K B** - high efficiency foliar potassium/boron
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