

Citrus connection



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

The evening of Thursday March the 7th, will bring the 34th annual meeting of the Highlands County Citrus Growers Association. The meeting will again be held at Seven-Sebring Raceway Hotel this year. We will enjoy a cocktail hour followed by a meal together, then take care of some quick business and hear from a few folks including our keynote speaker Dr. Charlie Messina, head of the new Crop Transformation Center in Gainesville. If you haven't yet registered for this event (reservations are required), I would encourage you to do so as it is always an enjoyable evening together with other growers and industry professionals.

During the business portion of the meeting, we will install newly elected board officers. The Board of Directors recently elected Bert Harris III to serve as president in 2024. I'm thankful for Bert's leadership and his willingness to serve again in this capacity. I know Bert will lead our board and association well.

On a personal note, I want to thank you all for the opportunity these past twelve months to serve as association president. It has been a good experience for me and challenged me in good ways. I also want to thank you for enduring my columns in the newsletter this past year. The president's column is always the first page on monthly newsletter, but don't be led into believing that the ordering of the newsletter's columns is an indicator of the prominence of the writer. Ray Royce deserves a tremendous amount of credit for making this association what it is. I'm thankful for his leadership and Highlands County Citrus Growers Association is fortunate to have him as our Executive Director.

I wrote in my first column last year that I was optimistic that 2023 would be the turning point for our industry with all the new therapies that were coming available. While we didn't see the big leap in productivity that we all had hoped for, I still think there's reason for optimism going forward. Groves are in general healthier than this time last year and primed for a healthy bloom. Much of what we've been told about OTC treatments, as well as other therapies, is that the compounding effects of these treatments takes a couple of years to see the benefits. We are all tired of waiting until "next year". Farmers are a resilient bunch and I believe if we stay the course and fight the fight, sweeter days are ahead for Florida citrus.

Aaron Nelson

**JAN
2024**

- CRAFT Program Updates
- Citrus BMP Manual
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- New HLB Therapies
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- USDA Crop Forecast
- Black Speech Contest
- HCCGA Board of Directors
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2024 Calendar of Events

March 1

Citrus Hall of Fame Induction Luncheon @ Florida Southern College in Lakeland

March 7

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

April 3

Florida Citrus Show @ UF Indian River REC in Ft. Pierce

April 9

Florida Citrus Growers' Institute @ SFSC in Avon Park

April 25

HCCGA Golf Day @ Sun 'N Lake Golf Club in Sebring

June 12-14

Annual Citrus Conference @ Bonita Springs

August 21-22

Citrus Expo @ Florida State Fairgrounds in Tampa

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

The 2024 HCCGA Annual Meeting is scheduled for the evening of Thursday, March 7th. We look forward to celebrating 34 years as an Association working on behalf of our membership. As part of the evening's program, Dr. Charlie Messina will share where he intends to quickly take the new University of Florida Crop Transformation Center (CTC) on its quest to battle HLB and develop the trees of the future. We will also recognize those folks that have made our major fellowship and fundraising events possible. Advance registration is required, so let us know ASAP if you would like to attend.



The CTC is in place in large part to long and very persistent encouragement by the grower community, including many efforts led by Ned Hancock and other growers, and the willingness of Dr. Scott Angle to push new UF President Ben Sasse to make it happen. President Sasse provided the seed money to get the CTC up and moving quickly, and the Department of Citrus and other State entities have also invested resources into the project.

Dr. Angle now serves as UF's Provost, and Dr. Rob Gilbert has been charged with leading UF/IFAS. Having Dr. Angle in this role should only help ensure that UF/IFAS and the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences gets the proper level of funding for its research and educational responsibilities as part of UF's land grant university mission.

Please know that your Association has a great Board of Directors, and collectively they and I look forward to working on your behalf in the coming months and years ahead. We strive each day to provide value to all of our members and the companies they represent by pursuing our Association's mission of "**protecting and enhancing the viability and profitability of commercial citrus grove properties in Highlands County**".

In that vein, I would like thank outgoing HCCGA President Aaron Nelson for his service as our Board president over the past year – he has done a fabulous job representing our Association and it has been a true pleasure working with him. So thank you for your tremendous service Aaron. Bert J. Harris III assumes the Board presidency at our annual meeting, and I know that he looks forward to representing our membership for the upcoming year.

A quick reminder that since we are now in a new tax assessment year it will behoove you to contact the Highlands County Property Appraiser's office and make sure that they have current and accurate information in regards to your grove properties. Having the accurate info can make a significant difference in how your property is assessed and ultimately taxed long term.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the many great companies that advertise within our newsletter, sharing their message across the agricultural community of central Florida. These folks make the production, printing and distribution of this valuable communication tool possible. I encourage our readers to consider doing business with these fine folks whenever they provide a product or service that your operation requires. We can always make room for another ad or two if you want to get some great exposure for your company – just let me know.

This is your newsletter - so if there are ever any topics or issues that you would like to see covered or elaborated upon, please do not hesitate to let me know. Same goes for the work of your Association – if there are issues or services that you perceive we need to pay more attention to, please share that as well.

Since one of our goals is to keep our members as informed as possible on a wide range of issues, never hesitate in contacting me day or night (cell # 863-381-8551) for additional information if you need it; or if I can be of any assistance on any matter, large or small.

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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CRAFT Program Updates

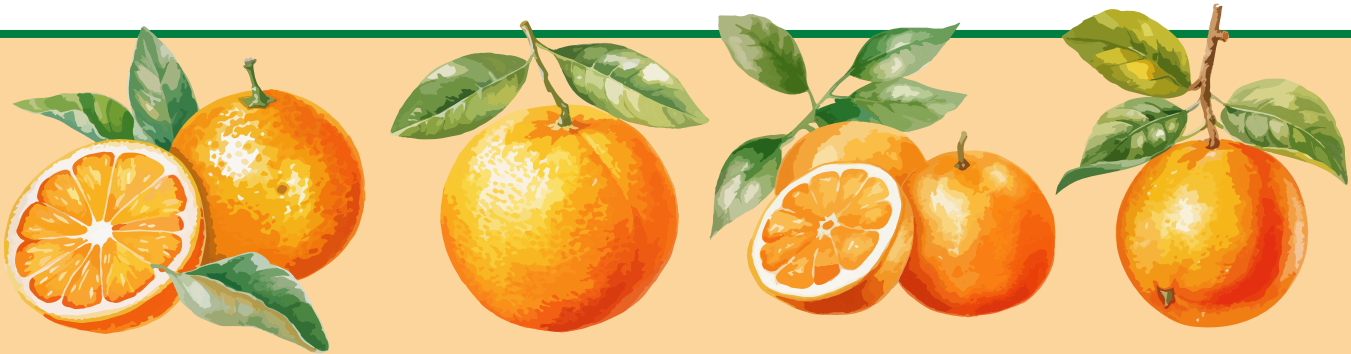
CRAFT Cycle Five Application Review Process Continues

The CRAFT Board of Directors recently approved a slate of Cycle Five Solid Set PEP Material projects following recommendations from the Technical Working Group. Eleven projects around the state were approved, for a total of 455 acres. These projects feature plant material from the Program for Expedited Propagation supported by the Florida Department of Citrus and Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and will focus on comparisons of five scions on the same rootstock.

CRAFT Scientific Coordinator Carisa Keller and the rest of the CRAFT staff are continuing to work with growers on the development process for all other (non-PEP) Cycle Five applications. Project designs will be reviewed by the Technical Working Group in February and March in preparation for a final recommendation to the Board of Directors. The Board is expected to vote on final approvals at their March or April meeting. All told, more than 14,000 acres worth of new planting proposals will be considered by the CRAFT Technical Working Group and Board of Directors for funding in Cycle Five.

Existing Tree Therapies Round Two Grower Agreements Due

Existing Tree Therapies Round Two participation agreements were finalized and released through the US Postal Service in mid-December. If a grower applied for the Existing Tree Therapies program and has not received their agreement, please contact Program Manager Tamara Wood at tamara@craftfdn.org or 863.698.9276 as soon as possible.



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Citrus BMP Manual Revision

Florida Commissioner of Agriculture & Consumer Services Wilton Simpson has tasked his staff to review and revise **“all”** of the Best Management Practices (BMP's) manuals that impact Florida agricultural operations in 2024. While revision work was undertaken by the Office of Ag Water Policy on the Citrus BMP manual in 2020, that work was never completed and submitted for the final rule making process. So the practices outlined in the 2012 edition of **Water Quality/Quantity Best Management Practices for Florida Citrus** are currently the “law” that enrolled citrus growers can be held accountable to.

The FDACS staff group, and some industry folks, that will work on the Citrus BMP manual have very recently started that function. It is expected that a few additional citrus production experts will be asked to join the effort in the coming weeks. The goal is to create a more concise Citrus BMP Manual that clearly states what state law requires, how to implement the applicable BMPs, what record keeping and documentation growers are required to maintain and share during an implementation verification audit without any unnecessary additional commentary. FDACS also plans to revise their audit training protocols for both their employees and growers in order to assist in maximum and effective BMP compliance.

HCCGA is involved in the manual revision process - so if there are any aspects of the 2012 Citrus BMP manual or the audit visit process that you feel are important to be addressed – please contact Ray at the HCCGA office.



Florida Citrus Industry Conference 2024

Just a reminder to save the dates of June 12th-14th for the Florida Citrus Industry Annual Conference in Bonita Springs. Florida Citrus Mutual has planned another great conference that will include informative educational sessions and a number of industry meetings for growers and associated partners to participate in. There will also be a number of fellowship events to enjoy, and this is an extremely family friendly event and venue if you have not attended the conference at the Hyatt Regency Coconut Point Resort and Spa before.

Citrus Mutual will open conference registration on or around March 1st, however you can reserve your hotel accommodations now at: <https://www.hyatt.com/en-US/group-booking/NAPRN/G-FCMF>

UF/IFAS Flower Bud Induction Advisories

The 2023-2024 Flower Bud Advisories provided by Dr. Tripti Vashisth (UF/IFAS CREC) are ongoing and 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.

HC Extension Agents

In the next several weeks the Highlands County Extension office is going to lose two of their extension agents who are moving on to other professional pursuits. Both Lourdes C. Pérez Cordero, the Agriculture (Citrus) & Natural Resources Extension Agent and Kalan Royal, the Livestock Extension Agent will be gone by the end of February. We thank both Kalan and Lourdes for their service to our agricultural community.

UF/IFAS is now beginning their process that should lead to both of the positions being posted for applicants within the next month. Both positions require a Bachelor's degree (*preferably in a somewhat related field*) with additional academic achievement and/or other position related experience factoring into the initial compensation level. An applicant for either position would also be required to begin work towards acquiring a Master's degree if they do not already have one over the next 5-6 years. The good news is that UF/IFAS will pay for that, and working within the UF/IFAS system does come with a good benefits package.

If you know someone that may be potentially interested in working in the Highlands County extension sector in either position, have them contact Dr. Anita Neal, UF/IFAS Extension District Director, at: asn@ufl.edu to gain additional information. You can also have them contact Ray at the HCCGA office for him to share his perspective on the positions.

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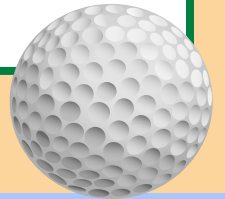
Dean Evans (863) 287-2251
Keith Hinkle (863) 381-1735
Mike Whitney (863) 581-3674



2024 HCCGA Golf Day

The Highlands County Citrus Growers Association's annual golf tournament has been scheduled for the afternoon of **Thursday, April 25th** this year, at the **SUN 'N LAKE Golf Club** in Sebring. So save the date to join us for a fun day on the golf course. A heartfelt thanks to **Heartland National Bank** for sponsoring again this year as the title sponsor.

A 12:00 PM luncheon and sign-in will precede the 1:00 PM tee off. Lunch, range balls, on-course water-soda-beer, post tournament hors d'oeuvres and a raffle drawing prize ticket will be included in each golfing entry. The cost will be \$100.00 per player (\$400.00 per foursome), and the tournament is open to the public. A four-player team scramble format will be used in the tournament, and there will be a number of hole contests to compete with others in your handicap class for in addition to gift certificate prizes for the top 3 teams in each of the three flights.



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Starting in the Grove to Find New HLB Therapies

Scientists at the U.S. Department of Agriculture-Agricultural Research Service (USDA-ARS) developed an idea to bypass lab assays, and test molecules directly in the field for their ability to solve HLB. As part of a USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) grant (number 2020-70029-33176), they built a collaborative team of researchers at USDA-ARS, the University of Florida and other partners. The team is field-testing 88 different molecules to identify those that can rejuvenate HLB-infected trees back to economic productivity.

ONE TRUE TEST

By 2024, the research team plans to have more than 200 molecules in the field. None of these molecules have been tested using a laboratory assay. Why? Because it is unknown how useful lab assays are for accurately predicting how well a treatment will work in the field. There is only one assay known that can definitively determine if a molecule or treatment works, and that assay is treating an HLB-infected tree in the field and observing the horticultural rejuvenation of the tree.

Field testing of molecules, products and technologies is arguably the single-most valuable research resource for solving HLB. If a product or technology does not result in the horticultural rejuvenation of a tree, then it does not work. This is the grove-first approach.

The grove-first approach is a research framework that requires three conditions:

- 1) The objective is to screen a large number of molecules.
- 2) Large numbers of HLB-infected trees are readily available.
- 3) The objective is to screen only for large effects.

These three conditions are easily met in Florida, making the state's citrus industry a living laboratory ideally suited for molecule/treatment screening. The process is simple. First, screen molecules in a limited number of HLB-infected trees to identify those that will then move to a second phase of grower-scale replicated field trials. This makes grower cooperators integral to the process of identifying molecules that can solve HLB.

The process is like how plant breeders develop new varieties. Large numbers of progeny from hybrid crosses are planted in the field, superior individuals are selected, and those selected individuals are tested in replicated field trials.

A MULTITUDE OF MOLECULES

The molecules being tested were identified from multiple sources, including substantial and ongoing contributions from Brian Scully, retired USDA-ARS laboratory director and plant breeder, who is scouring the literature and global regulatory records for molecules to test. Scully's molecule-sleuthing research is funded by the Citrus Research and Development Foundation and has resulted in a large and rich assortment of molecules. Currently, over 200 extremely diverse molecules have been identified and placed into a queue to test.

*See **THERAPIES** on page 11*



THERAPIES, Con't from page 10

The grove-first approach is testing commercially available formulations of these molecules. Scully's research has uncovered quite literally hundreds of molecules that are suitable for grove-first testing. These molecules vary in their regulatory and public perception friendliness. They range from no to minimal regulatory requirements and positive public perception to those that would require higher levels of regulation similar to what is required for **oxytetracycline** (OTC) and other antibiotics used in agriculture. The objective is to broaden the number of molecules available to growers to treat HLB.

INJECT AND OBSERVE

The basic approach to test a molecule is to inject an HLB-infected tree with 100 milliliters of a solution containing the molecule using a FlexInject device. Horticultural rejuvenation is determined by improvements in the canopy, roots, and most importantly, fruit quality/size/number. Trunk damage is also being carefully assessed with photo documentation.

The improvements in tree health observed in the screening stage must be large for a molecule or molecule combination to be advanced to field trials. For foliage, this means effects that are visual and readily apparent. For a molecule to be selected for further testing, its effects must be similar to or better than a commercially available formulation of OTC, which is being used as the baseline control.

A molecule's effect on tree horticulture is evaluated over the summer, fall, winter and spring phases of the phenological growth and fruiting cycle. Thus, at least one full season (one year) is required to determine if a molecule's effect is sufficiently large to justify more extensive field trials. The 88 molecules currently being tested were injected into 10-year-old Valencia trees from June to mid-July 2023. Canopy health was measured using the Page/Slinski Disease Index (DI) quadrant rating system. Before treatment, all trees were photographed, and DI ratings were taken. Thereafter, DI ratings were taken every 30 days. This created a visual rating and documentation system to assess effects.

RESULTS TO DATE

At the time of this article, the 90-day DI ratings for the effects on summer flush have been completed and over 8,000 images have been taken to document the effects. Eighteen molecules reduced the DI equal to or greater than what is being seen with OTC, and there were 48 molecules with effects greater than the water-injected control but less than the OTC treatment. Trees with improved foliage resulted in a lower 90-day DI rating and exhibited various forms that ranged from an overall thickening of the canopy to a profusion of large leaves. These effects were often observed on the injection side of the tree.

The upcoming winter flush phase will determine how well the molecules maintain any improved summer flush. Because cooler weather exacerbates HLB symptoms, the winter flush DI ratings are expected to be particularly useful for selecting promising molecules. Fruit will be harvested and measured in the final spring phase.

Though various aspects of this NIFA project will eventually be published in refereed journals, there is a significant amount of information that might be of immediate value to growers. ***If you are a grower and this project interests you enough where you want to try any of the molecules that are showing effects***, contact Randall Niedz (randall.niedz@usda.gov) or Michelle Heck (michelle.cilia@usda.gov) to be added to a list of grower cooperators. The team will also evaluate molecules or combinations of molecules for interested parties with the next set of molecules to be tested. Those experiments are expected to begin in February or March 2024.

*Randall P. Niedz, Michelle Heck, Nick Larson and Ellen Cochran are scientists with USDA-ARS.
Lorenzo Rossi and Guillermo Locatelli are researchers with UF/IFAS
Courtesy of Citrus Industry Magazine*

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.

All Association members should have received an invitation and reservation form in the mail in late January. The dinner is open to all **current** 2024 grower and associate members who wish to attend; however advance **reservations are required**, so please return your reservation/ sponsorship form as soon as possible if you would like to attend. We certainly appreciate all of the entities that choose to help defray the cost of this event through sponsorship investment. We would especially like to thank the **Florida Department of Citrus** for sponsoring our social hour and the audio visual aspects of the program.

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.

Our Keynote Speaker this year will be **Dr. Charlie Messina** who is heading up the new **Crop Transformation Center (CTC)**. I believe that our members and their guests will be very interested in hearing what Dr. Messina has planned for the Center, and equally importantly how quickly they have gotten under way and adopted a very aggressive timeline for the utilization of a wide array of biotech tools for the creation of tolerant or resistant trees. The University of Florida, and other entities, have invested millions of dollars into the Center already and Dr. Messina has brought some very bright minds in to collectively work on how to best produce and commercialize the trees of the future.

We also expect to hear briefly from two of our grower members: **Morgan McKenna Porter**, the Chair of the **Citrus Research and Development Foundation (CRDF)**, and **Aaron Himrod**, CRDF Research Committee Chair, about the work of CRDF and how working collaboratively with the CTC they expect to advance the fight against HLB on multiple fronts.

So contact the HCCGA office (863-385-8091 or admin@hccga.com) ASAP to invest in event sponsorship and/or secure your reservations if you have not already done so. We hope you will join us on the evening of March 7th.



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Miss Florida Citrus Pageant

On Friday, March 1, 2024, young women from throughout the state will have a chance to compete for the title of Miss Florida Citrus, along with a chance to earn over \$2,000 in scholarship money and the chance to become Miss America!

This will mark the 100th Anniversary of when the first Florida Citrus Queen was crowned on the shores of Lake Silver in Winter Haven in 1924. Candidates compete in Private Interviews, On Stage Conversation, Health & Fitness, Talent/HERStory™ and Evening Gown in this Miss America preliminary, with the winners going to the Miss Florida competition in June. The event will be held at Nora Mayo Hall in Winter Haven beginning at 7PM. Tickets to the event are \$20 in advance and \$25 at the door.

The following night will feature a Golden Gala Celebration honoring all the Florida Citrus Queen/ Miss Florida Citrus titleholders over the years, and will also be held at Nora Mayo Hall. Tickets to that event are \$125 per person, or a reserved table of 8 for \$1,500.

To compete or to sponsor, contact Brenda Eubanks Burnette at (561) 351-4314 or MFCitrus81@gmail.com.

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Updated Research Brassinosteroid and Weed Management

Brassinosteroids for HLB-infected trees and the latest on year-round weed management were discussed at a January 17th OJ Break at the Citrus Research and Education Center in Lake Alfred, Florida.

UF/IFAS multi-county citrus Extension agent Chris Oswalt hosted the event. UF/IFAS assistant professors Fernando Alferez and Ramdas Kanissery made the presentations on brassinosteroids and weeds, respectively. Both work at the Southwest Florida Research and Education Center in Immokalee.

BRASSINOSTEROIDS

Alferez said his research has shown that brassinosteroids:

- Induce immunity to HLB in young citrus trees
- Increase tree vigor
- Reduce HLB-spreading psyllids in new flushes
- Reduce canker and greasy spot
- Synchronize flushing
- Increase fruit yield and quality in different varieties

Learn more about brassinosteroid benefits at: <https://citrusindustry.net/2023/10/31/brassinosteroids-can-improve-juice-quality-and-fruit-yield/>

YEAR-ROUND WEED MANAGEMENT

“The focus of a citrus weed management program is the tree, not the weeds,” Kanissery declared. Key points he made regarding weed management included:

- Weed management helps improve citrus yield.
- Weed control may help management of HLB-spreading psyllids.
- Citrus growers typically spend about 12% to 15% of their production costs on weed control.
- Apply herbicides when there is ample daylight.
- Don't apply post-emergent herbicides when temperatures are below 60 degrees. Do apply residual herbicides if the label allows it. Avoid spray contact with trees during cold weather, because herbicide injury potential is high then.
- Allow at least 6 hours of dry period after applying herbicides during the rainy season. Generally, rainfall within 6 hours after application may reduce effectiveness.

See **MANAGEMENT** on page 15



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MANAGEMENT, Con't from page 14

- If spraying herbicides during hot weather, apply during the cooler part of the day. Efficacy of post-emergent herbicides drops when temperatures are above 95 degrees. The injury potential to the tree is high then.
- Common weeds seen year-round in Florida citrus include Spanish needle, ragweed parthenium, goatweed, Bermuda grass, Guinea grass, dayflower and nutsedge.
- Spray when weeds are young. Never let weeds grow and adapt.
- For tree safety, avoid herbicide spray contact with stems, foliage and fruits.
- Rotate post-emergent herbicides.
- Use the lower end of the herbicide labeled rates during the first year after planting.
- Cover crops offer numerous benefits to growers, including suppressing weed

Courtesy of Citrus Industry Magazine

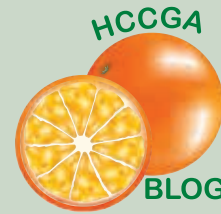
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2024 HCCGA Membership Dues

All HCCGA members should have received their 2024 membership dues renewal statements in the mail in mid-December. We have already received renewal dues payment from most of our members, however if you did not receive your renewal invoice, or have questions about your membership; please contact the HCCGA office at (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 34 plus years.

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

Florida Citrus Show Serves Up Great Education and Food!



During the Florida Citrus Show's citrus seminars, growers will learn about key production topics of interest. Presentations will focus on the performance of trunk injection therapies and what could be the next injection therapy being tested and developed. Many citrus rootstocks and varieties are also in development. The question for growers is which ones are best suited for their groves? During the seminar, plant breeders will provide their input on which new scions and rootstocks show the most promise in the HLB era. These topics and more will provide growers with the latest research and production information in Florida citrus.

The tailgate-style lunch also will provide ample opportunities for growers to network with their peers, see the latest citrus production products and services and enjoy great food.

Don't miss the Florida Citrus Show on April 3 in Fort Pierce.

Register today at: www.citrusindustry.net/florida-citrus-show-attend.

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

2024 Citrus Hall of Fame

On March 1st at Florida Southern College in Lakeland at the George W. Jenkins Fieldhouse, the Florida Citrus Hall of Fame will induct **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. These 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.

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.

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



The University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences and Southeast AgNet have partnered to provide the latest news on citrus-related research in monthly podcasts at: <http://citrusindustry.net/allforcitrus/>
The podcast, “All in for Citrus,” features short interviews with scientists working to find solutions to citrus greening and other devastating citrus diseases. The podcast complements the UF/IFAS Citrus Research website at: citrusresearch.ifas.ufl.edu, and their monthly newsletter.



USDA Citrus Crop Forecast Update

February 8, 2024

All Oranges 19.8 Million Boxes

The 2023-2024 Florida all orange forecast released on February 8, 2024 by the USDA Agricultural Statistics Board is 19.8 million boxes, down 700,000 boxes from the January forecast. If realized, this will be 25 percent more than last season's final production. The forecast consists of 6.80 million boxes of non-Valencia oranges (early, mid-season, and Navel varieties) and 13.0 million boxes of Valencia oranges.

Non-Valencia Oranges 6.80 Million Boxes

The forecast of non-Valencia production is reduced 700,000 boxes to 6.80 million boxes. Size and drop components were final last month. The Row Count survey conducted January 25-26, 2024, showed 96 percent of the early and mid-season non-Valencia rows, excluding Navels, are harvested. The Navel forecast, included in the non-Valencia portion of the forecast, is 200,000 boxes.

Valencia Oranges 13.0 Million Boxes

The forecast of Valencia production is unchanged from the January forecast at 13.0 million boxes. Current fruit size is below average and is projected to be below average at harvest. Current droppage is above average and projected to be above average at harvest.

All Grapefruit 2.40 Million Boxes

The February forecast of all grapefruit production is unchanged from the January forecast. The white grapefruit forecast is unchanged at 300,000 boxes. Fruit size and drop are final in this report. White and red grapefruit final size are above average. Drop for white grapefruit is below average, while red grapefruit drop is above average. The Row Count survey conducted January 25-26, 2024 showed 60 percent of the grapefruit rows are harvested.

Tangerines & Mandarins 550,000 Boxes

The forecast for tangerines and tangelos is unchanged from the January forecast at 550,000 boxes, 15 percent more than last season's utilization of 480,000 boxes. This forecast number includes all certified tangerine and tangelo varieties.



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Julia C. Black Memorial Speech Contest & Scholarship



The inaugural Julia C. Black Memorial Speech Contest and Scholarship Program, presented by Florida Citrus Mutual, is underway. The program encourages students in grades 9-12 to learn more about Florida's agricultural industry, specifically Florida citrus.

The speech contest includes two phases: District and State contests. Five district competitions, based on Florida Citrus Mutual's Board of Directors districts, were held throughout the state in January 2024. District winners will go on to compete at the State Competition the week of March 18, 2024, in Bartow.

The winner of the State Competition will present their winning speech at the Florida Citrus Industry Annual Conference on June 13, 2024 in Bonita Springs.

Competing in the Highlands County District contest on January 16th were three High School Juniors representing their respective High Schools: Mark Barben, Avon Park HS, who won high District honors, Josephine Dean, Lake Placid HS, who finished second and Rylie Brooker of Sebring HS.

All three students did a tremendous job of researching many facets of the Florida citrus industry for their very informative speeches, and the scoring was extremely tight – so thank you to all three of these young people from Highlands County for being great ambassadors of our industry. Good luck to Mark Barben as he moves on to the State Competition!

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HCCGA Board of Directors Elects 2024 Officers

The HCCGA Board of Directors, per the requirements of the HCCGA by-laws, elected new officers for 2024 during their January 11th Board meeting. Serving as Association Officers for 2024 after taking office at the HCCGA Annual Meeting on March 7th will be:

President: **Bert Harris III**

Vice-President: **Riley McKenna**

Treasurer: **Doug Deen**

Secretary: **William "Billy" Barben**

Bert J. Harris III, a citrus grower and lawyer based in Lake Placid, has been a member of the HCCGA Board of Directors since 2016 and previously served as Association President in 2021. Mr. Harris believes that the Association's mission of not only serving growers agronomic interests, but protecting and enhancing their overall property rights welfare is especially critical in today's environment.

So congratulations to all of the new officers, and thank you for your willingness to serve!

2024 Florida Citrus Growers' Institute

The 2024 Florida Citrus Growers' Institute program will be held on Tuesday, April 9th on the campus of South Florida State College's University Center Auditorium in Avon Park. Save the date now to plan to join the all-day educational event complete with CEU's for Certified Crop Advisors and Restricted Use Pesticide license holders and lunch. More details on the agenda and registration will be coming soon.

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Farm TEAM Card

Commissioner of Agriculture Wilton Simpson has announced that farmers can now apply for the Florida Farm Tax Exempt Agricultural Materials (TEAM) Card.

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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- **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

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