

# Citrus connection



## HIGHLANDS COUNTY CITRUS GROWERS President's Column by Bert Harris

Christmas! Also the time of year we look to see whether there is any left for us in the account after paying another year's bills. But I digress.

A **Big Thank You** to those who supported our recent Citrus Fun Shoot. We enjoyed a beautiful outdoor day of friendship and fellowship. And, Ray pulled in a good haul for the Association! As any good journalist would say—A good time was had by all!

A **BIGGER THANK YOU** to our 200 Associate members. We are much stronger because of your investment in our Association. Please know that we are here to help you with your business interests as well.

The funds generated will support our Association's mission of providing the latest citrus information to our members and the best representation of our members' property interests to our governments.

Citrus has suffered its very own "Climate Change" (rather sobering I might add). Like many of you, I applied a massive dose of iron (front end loader) to most of my blocks. Fortunately, I listened to Dad and didn't quit my day job.

Which brings me to my point. Today, our land is our primary asset. Protecting the value of your land is critical to your family's financial future. Land use rights determine the value of your land. Those rights are controlled largely by our county's comprehensive plan and land development regulations.

As required by law, our County Commission has begun the process of revising our current comprehensive plan to create the **Highlands County 2050 Comprehensive Plan**. The initial studies and drafts are **today being crafted by the county's staff and consultants**.

**Every line of text in the plan and every line on every map attached to the plan has a real potential of affecting the value of your property.** It is critical that we understand every change being proposed to and considered by our County Commission. Those changes **will determine** the future value of your property.

Point being—now more than ever—our Association needs to hang together to protect our financial interests in our land. Because--as has been said throughout history—we either hang together or we hang separately.

Our Association (Ray) will continue to be very active in the development of our 2050 Comprehensive Plan; and will keep our membership advised as issues need to be addressed.

The more trees we push, the more important will be the County's 2050 Comprehensive Plan as it WILL control your land value. After that last orange goes on the truck, investing a few hundred bucks a year in Association Membership will help protect your property values.

Hanging out in Lake Placid, I wish a very Merry Christmas and Happy (profitable) New Year!

*Bert Harris III*

## NOV 2024

- HCCGA Fun Shoot
- 24-25 Citrus Production Guide
- CRAFT Update
- HC Agricultural Deputies
- All in for Citrus Podcast
- HCCGA Sponsorship Pkgs.
- BMP App Site Launch
- HC Grove Property Appraisals
- Black Mem. Speech Contest
- HCCGA Membership Dues
- HCCGA Annual Meeting
- Winter Weather Watch
- Bud Induction Advisories



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# 2025 Calendar of Events

**March 6**

HCCGA Annual Meeting

**April 24**

HCCGA Golf Day

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



*Happy Holidays!*



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# Executive Director's Report

BY RAY ROYCE

Our 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Citrus Sporting Clays Fun Shoot (*our largest social/fundraising event*), which was held at Quail Creek Sporting Ranch on December 7<sup>th</sup>, took place on an absolutely beautiful day for some outdoor recreation. We had a great group of participants (*our largest in 7 years*) join us to shoot and enjoy a tremendous meal. I want to say thank you on behalf of our organization to all of the companies and individuals that have sponsored and supported this shoot in some manner!



Congratulations to Arlene Tuck and Don Elwell for being elected to serve as Chairman and Vice-Chair respectively of the Board of County Commissioners for the next year. These two members of the County Commission have a very strong appreciation for the role that agriculture plays in our community. Our Association is fortunate to have a tremendous working relationship with not only our elected leadership, but our County staff as well. So, congrats as well to Laurie Hurner for her two year anniversary serving as Highlands County Administrator. This makes working on the issues that directly, or indirectly, affect agricultural property owners so much easier.

By the time you are reading this newsletter, we will have sent 2025 membership renewal dues notices out to all of our current members. If you do not receive a renewal notice by December 16<sup>th</sup> or so, please let us know ASAP.

The collective voice of our membership is truly an amazing and positive force that demands consideration in a wide range of issue deliberations. I can assure our grower members, even if your property is not actively growing citrus, that the work done by the Association on your behalf has saved you more money each year (*in property taxes alone for example*) than we ask you to invest in dues. Your continued support of the Association is both appreciated and needed by your fellow growers and those who work with us as allied partners. If you have any questions about your membership, don't hesitate in giving me a call.

Please save the evening of Thursday, March 6, 2025 on your calendar for the HCCGA Annual Meeting. Our 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting will begin with a 5:30 pm social hour and the dinner and evening's program will commence at 6:30 pm. We are currently in the very early phases of planning for the event, but all current Association members should receive an invitation in mid January. I hope you can join us that evening!

It will soon be the first of the year and this is the time to notify the Highlands County Property Appraiser's office about the status of things in your various grove blocs. There can be a significant difference in how your grove's appraised taxable value is set if the proper tree age categories and percentage of "skips" are on record with Raymond McIntyre's office. However, it is incumbent on you to make sure that the Property Appraiser's office has the correct information. If you want to discuss your options in this regard, don't hesitate in contacting me.

On that note - we are indeed fortunate to have a Property Appraiser who understands our industry and the complex set of challenges we face. Thank you Raymond!

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 probably do not have a good e-mail address for you- so please let us know right away.

Finally, I would like to wish all of our members and friends Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays and a wonderful New Year! We are indeed blessed to live and work in the Communities, State, and Country that we do, and I hope that we will all take a few moments during this wonderful season to recognize how important our families, friends and co-workers are to us!

Thanks, Ray



# Info Notes

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## 2024-2025 Florida Citrus Production Guides

The 2024-2025 Florida Citrus Production Guides are available to pick up at the UF/IFAS Highlands County Extension office (*we have a few at the HCCGA office as well*) or the handbooks are available online (with printable sections) at:

[https://crec.ifas.ufl.edu/resources/production-guide\\_](https://crec.ifas.ufl.edu/resources/production-guide_)

## Florida Minimum Wage

Just a reminder that the fourth increase dictated by the 2020 constitutional amendment, raises the Florida's minimum wage rate to \$13 an hour on September 30, 2024. The voter-approved amendment will gradually lead to a \$15-an-hour minimum wage on September 30, 2026.

## 2024 Florida Citrus Growers' Institute Presentations Online

The 2024 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/2024>

## 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.

## Sales Tax Exemption Forms for Ag Uses

Florida Farm Bureau has a very informative page on their website that lists a number of potential agriculturally related items that may be exempt from sales tax. It also has info about the TEAM card. It can be found at:

<https://www.floridafarmbureau.org/agricultural-sales-tax-exemptions-in-florida>.

## 2024 Citrus Expo Presentations

The educational seminars at the 2024 Citrus Expo are available online at: <https://crec.ifas.ufl.edu/citrus-research/presentations>.

## "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.

## 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.

# 2024 HCCGA Citrus Fun Shoot

The 27<sup>th</sup> Annual HCCGA Citrus Fun Shoot took place on Saturday, December 7<sup>th</sup> at **Quail Creek Sporting Ranch** on an absolutely fabulous day for outdoor recreation. The shoot featured some pretty darn fine shooting, great food, and absolutely tremendous fellowship. This year's shoot had another great crowd of shooters with 331 men, women (*this category grew to over 40 women this year*) and young people taking to the two courses at Quail Creek, and another 26 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 **American Metal Supply**. After a great morning of shooting and outdoor fellowship, the group enjoyed a very tasty lunch sponsored by **Farm Credit of Florida** of Peel & Eat Shrimp, Fish Dip, Sweet Corn, Cole Slaw, Mashed Potatoes and Smoked Prime Rib.

The Citrus 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 the 6 guns that were won by **Luke Sigrist, Wes Clark, Mike McCafferty, Wayne Smith, Catherine Mills** and **Burt Apolinario**.

Our friends **HC Sheriff Paul Blackman, Agro-K, Quality Roofing & Sheet Metal, Tree Defender** and **Marden Industries/SuperTrak** 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 **Tree Defender** sponsored two TCL 32" HD Smart TVs, which were won by **Anthony Canevari** and **Ray Broughton**. Winning two Groove Onn Wireless Party Speakers courtesy of **HC Sheriff Paul Blackman** were **Scott Donley** and **Liz Popovics**. Our friends at **Quality Roofing & Sheet Metal** sponsored two SONY Noise Cancelling Headphones, and those were won by **Doug Williams** and **Adam Yingling**. Winning two Moultrie Cellular Trail Cameras, courtesy of **Agro-K** were **Carmen Bremmer** and **Wesley Georges**. The final two green bird prizes, JBL Bluetooth Camo Speakers, courtesy of **Marden Industries/SuperTrak**, went to **Allen Webb** and **Nick Bruursema**.

In addition, **Highlands County Board of County Commissioners Attorney Sherry Sutphen** sponsored the **Shooters Only Drawing** where another gun was drawn for and awarded to **Cale Drapal**.

There was also a drawing for Acacia Wood Tabletop Bar Box courtesy of **The Twig (an Online Marketplace for Lifestyle Accoutrements)** which all of the participants that completed their contact information forms at the shoot were entered into with **Emma Ezell** being the lucky winner.

After the Red vs. Blue Course shoot-off process, the winner of the 2024 HCCGA Citrus Fun Shoot High Overall Individual Shooter Award was **Ted Combs (95/100)**. The Individual Runner-up Award went to **Ray Swilley (98/100)**.

**Brayden Story (87/100)** won the High Overall Youth Award (16 & younger) after a shoot off in that category, and the High Overall Ladies Award went to **Allison Franza Hill (94/100)**, after that category's shoot off.

The High Overall Team, **Story Grove Service (383/400)**, composed of **Wayne Faulkner, Joe Franza, Brian Kramer** and **Ray Swilley** won the Red vs. Blue course shoot-off. The **Griffin Fertilizer (359/100)** team, with members **Landon Smoak, Luke Larson, Nick Bruursema** and **Jed Watts** 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](http://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. We look forward to seeing you next December for the 2025 HCCGA Citrus Fun Shoot.

**Thank you to all of our Citrus Fun Shoot Sponsors for your support!**

**Title Sponsors**

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 American Metal Supply**

**Video Scoring Sponsor  
 Florida Senator Ben Albritton**

**Shooters Only Drawing Sponsor  
 HC County Attorney Sherry Sutphen – Roper, Townsend & Sutphen, P.A.**

**Green Bird Station Sponsors  
 HC Sheriff Paul Blackman ~ Quality Roofing & Sheet Metal  
 Tree Defender ~ Marden Industries/Super Trak ~ Agro-K**

**Gold Sponsors  
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*See SHOOT on page 7*



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SHOOT, Con't from page 6

#### Team Sponsors

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#### Station Sponsors

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Pantuso, Inc. ~ Chemical Containers ~ Murphy Ag Solutions of the Heartland  
HC Commissioner Chris Campbell ~ Waypoints Financial ~ Southridge Citrus Nursery  
Tessengerlo Kerley USA ~ Florida Grove Hedgers ~ HC Commissioner Scott Kirouac  
Tim Hurner Family ~ M.E. Stephens Fruit Co ~ Triangle Chemical ~ Aerobotics  
Taylor Oil Company ~ Lakeside Dental Arts/David E. Willey, DMD ~ Highlands County Farm Bureau

## '24-'25 Citrus Production Guide

The **2024–2025 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.

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.

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>.

There are two other UF/IFAS publications that growers may find helpful. The first is **Keeping Citrus Growers Informed** at: <https://crec.ifas.ufl.edu/citrus-research/presentations/citrus-expo-2024/booklets/citrus-growers-informed>. Which is a research book containing updates on more than 70 ongoing UF/IFAS research projects. The second publication is **Growing Citrus - A multipronged HLB strategy (August 2024)** at: <https://crec.ifas.ufl.edu/citrus-research/presentations/citrus-expo-2024/booklets/growing-citrus>. This short 17-page booklet is a brief guide to the most important things growers should keep in mind when developing HLB management plans for groves.

# CRAFT Update

## **CRAFT Cycle Six Applications Under Review**

The application window for the New Tree Plantings Cycle Six and Existing Tree Therapies (ETT) Round 3 has closed. CRAFT received 227 New Tree Planting applications, including 13 solid-set projects featuring plant material from the Program for Expedited Propagation (PEP), 50 traditional solid-set projects, and 164 reset applications.

Together, almost 10,000 acres of new planting proposals will be considered by the CRAFT Technical Working Group (TWG) and Board of Directors for funding in Cycle Six. This demand exceeds the funding available for this cycle and eligible projects that are not selected for immediate funding will be added to the project waitlist for future funding.

Carisa Keller, CRAFT Scientific Coordinator, and Tina Buice, Assistant Program Manager, have organized the applications and the review process in ongoing. The CRAFT TWG is reviewing the applications and the application will either be recommended to the CRAFT Board of Directors for approval or moved to the waitlist. This process can take time, especially with more than 200 applications. CRAFT anticipates issuing contracts with instructions to applicants selected for funding starting in January.

## **Existing Tree Therapies Round Three Grower Contracts**

CRAFT also received 662 Existing Tree Therapies Round Three (ETT) applications covering approximately 47,000 acres for inclusion in the ETT program. Again, the application demand exceeds the funding available for this round. Applicants that are selected for funding will be receiving their contract in December for execution and return to CRAFT. The package will also include instructions regarding next steps and payment processes. Participants are encouraged to read the instructions carefully before signing and returning their agreements.

If you have any questions, please contact Steven Hall, CRAFT Executive Director and Program Director, at [Steven@craftfdn.org](mailto:Steven@craftfdn.org) or (863) 333-2931.



CRAFT's mission is to move lab and research solutions into commercial groves for commercial-scale field trials, collect data on the results of those field trials and create an integrated data management system allowing growers, researchers and other interested parties to analyze the efficacy and efficiency of various strategies, treatments and therapies.

For more information, visit [CRAFTfdn.org](http://CRAFTfdn.org) or contact Steven Hall - 863.682-1115 or [Steven@CRAFTfdn.org](mailto:Steven@CRAFTfdn.org).



863-439-2877

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U.S. Patent Nos. 11,122,752; 11,406,063; 11,407,170; & 11,533,777



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# Highlands County Ag Deputies

Highlands County Sheriff Paul Blackman has put together a very robust agricultural deputy program that focuses on Ag related issues and crimes.

Remember to **always** report any crime, large or small, that impacts your Ag operation as it may be part of a pattern of similar offenses. In addition to utilizing the 911 system, you can also contact any of the deputies or Ag unit leadership below.

## Major Darin Hood

863-381-2082

[dhood@highlandssheriff.org](mailto:dhood@highlandssheriff.org)

## Captain John Barcinas

863-443-2142

[jbarcinas@highlandssheriff.org](mailto:jbarcinas@highlandssheriff.org)

## Lieutenant Scott Williams

863-443-3179

[swilliams@highlandssheriff.org](mailto:swilliams@highlandssheriff.org)

## Deputy Charley Peck

863-381-3273

[cpeck@highlandssheriff.org](mailto:cpeck@highlandssheriff.org)



## Deputy Coleman O'Gara

[cogara@highlandssheriff.org](mailto:cogara@highlandssheriff.org)

813-365-0133

## Deputy Jeff Turner

[jturner@highlandssheriff.org](mailto:jturner@highlandssheriff.org)

863-214-6227

## Deputy Tyler Bumby

[tbumby@highlandssheriff.org](mailto:tbumby@highlandssheriff.org)

863-399-2509

## Deputy Rob Gunthorp

[rgunthorp@highlandssheriff.org](mailto:rgunthorp@highlandssheriff.org)

863-214-5413

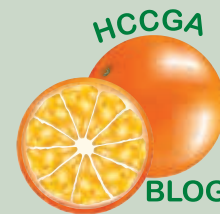
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The University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences and Southeast AgNet have partnered to provide the latest news on citrus-related research in monthly podcasts at: <http://citrusindustry.net/allinforcitrus/>

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

**UF/IFAS**  
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

**ALL  
IN** *for Citrus  
Podcast*

# 2025 HCCGA Promotional and Sponsorship Packages

A number of our HCCGA Associate members have indicated to us that they want the ability to plan their promotional/sponsorship investments for an entire year for budgeting purposes, to lock in the lowest possible rates, and/or to not have to deal with solicitations on an individual basis.

If your firm would like to take advantage of “**guaranteed pricing based on 2024 rates**” for next year - you can now take advantage of the opportunity to make arrangements for a 2025 promotional package with a total value of **\$2,500.00 or more** in order to ensure that the 2024 “a la carte pricing” shown below will be locked in and utilized. A firm that utilizes this package deal can certainly still decide at a later date to engage in additional promotional opportunities if they so desire.

If a package is not secured during this time period; individual prices for 2025 advertising and sponsorship opportunities are subject to potential increases. For more detailed information about any of the events or advertising opportunities, or to discuss and/or create your individual promotional plan, contact Ray or Jan at the HCCGA office.

*Discover pricing and services on page 11*

## COMMITTED TO AG. COMMITTED TO YOU.

### LOANS FOR:

- Farmland
- Ag Operating Expenses
- Equipment
- Timberland
- Large & Small Acreage
- Homes & Construction

### OTHER SERVICES:

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# 2025 Promotional & Sponsorship Menu

## HCCGA Associate Membership

Annual HCCGA Associate membership **\$100.00**

## HCCGA Annual Meeting (March 6, 2025)

Gold Table Sponsorship (reserved table for 8) **\$500.00**

Silver Seat Sponsorship (4 reserved seats) **\$250.00**

Bronze Seat Sponsorship (2 reserved seats) **\$100.00**

## HCCGA "Citrus Connection" Newsletter Ad Rates

Full Page - Full Color, per month (min. 3 months) **\$ 300.00**

Full Page - B/W, per month (min. 3 months) **\$ 225.00**

½ Page - Full Color, per month (min. 6 months) **\$ 200.00**

½ Page - B/W, per month (min. 6 months) **\$ 150.00**

⅓ Page - Full Color (12 months) **\$ 1500.00**

⅓ Page - Full Color (6 months) **\$ 900.00**

Business Card - Full Color, one year - 12 issues **\$ 500.00**

Business Card - Full Color, six months - 6 issues **\$ 350.00**

Business Card - B/W, one year - 12 issues **\$ 400.00**

Business Card - B/W, six months - 6 issues **\$ 250.00**

**\*\* All Business card size ads must be placed for a minimum of six consecutive months.**

## HCCGA Golf Day (April 24, 2025)

Team Foursome Sponsorship **\$400.00**

*4 Tournament participants with lunch*

## Annual HCCGA Member Directory Ad Rates

¼ Page Ad (B/W) **\$ 200.00**

½ Page Ad (B/W) **\$ 300.00**

½ Page Ad (full color) **\$ 400.00**

Full Page (B/W) **\$ 450.00**

Full Page Ad (full color) **\$ 600.00**

## HCCGA Sporting Clays Fun Shoot (December, 2025)

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**\*This menu represents the promotional advertising and sponsorship rates for 2024\***

# New BMP Cost-Share Application Site Launched

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Office of Agricultural Water Policy (FDACS OAWP) recently announced updates to the Best Management Practices (BMP) Cost Share Program.

A new application portal is now open. Applications can be submitted directly via smartphone or computer. Learn more about the BMP Program, including how to request project funding at: <https://www.fdacs.gov/Agriculture-Industry/Water/Agricultural-Best-Management-Practices/BMP-Cost-Share-Program>.

There are now clearer guidelines on eligible reimbursement items. An enhanced reimbursement option will also be available for those who enter into a confidential data-sharing agreement.

Updates to the BMP Program are designed to increase accessibility and transparency. Fully trained field staff will assist with the transition and application process for interested individuals.

FDACS OAWP will prioritize awarding first-time participants in the BMP Cost Share Program and projects that will result in the highest level of nutrient reductions to help achieve basin management action plan goals and water conservation.

Funding will be based on the submittal of the necessary information for the request. Completed requests will be reviewed in the order in which they are received. Review of each cost-share funding request will be conducted by FDACS. Additional information from the producer, including a site visit, may be requested by FDACS before a funding decision is made.

When applying, producers must meet the following requirements for their funding request to be considered:

1. The property where the prospective project is located must be in production for at least one year prior to applying (regardless of ownership/lease).
2. The producer must have an active Notice of Intent to Implement Agricultural BMPs for the property where the proposed project will take place.
3. An implementation verification site visit must have been performed within the last two years (exceptions available if in a storm-impacted region).
4. The producer must provide a statement regarding any previous or current compliance action that resulted in an administrative order with a water management district, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection or FDACS, if applicable.

FDACS will match or overmatch other agency/entity funding as long as the total cost-share award does not exceed 90% of the total cost to the awarded producer.

If there are no other agency/entity funding partners, FDACS will allow for cost-share reimbursement up to a maximum project total of \$150,000 per project for approved services, equipment and improvements.

*Source: FDACS OAWP*

# Citrus Nutrition Day

WEDNESDAY  
January  
**22**  
2025



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Learn about the latest citrus nutrition research progress and strategies for applying nutrients in Florida citrus.

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## Location

UF/IFAS Citrus Research and Education Center  
Ben Hill Griffin, Jr. Citrus Hall  
700 Experiment Station Road  
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## Registration

No cost to attend, but registration is required.  
<https://citrusnutrition2025.eventbrite.com>

**Registration Deadline: January 15, 2025**

For more information, contact Jamie Burrow  
[jdyates@ufl.edu](mailto:jdyates@ufl.edu), 863-956-8648

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8:30 am - Registration

9:00 am - Welcome

9:05 am - Update on BMP Research Project,  
Davie Kadyampakeni

9:30 am - Citrus Nutrition Box Program: The Final  
Results, Jamie Burrow

9:55 am - Economics, Kim Morgan

10:20 am - Enhancing Citrus Growth: Harnessing  
Silicon as a Plant Beneficial Nutrient,  
Muhammad Shahid

10:45 am - Break

11:00 am - Precision Nutrient Management for  
Rejuvenating HLB-affected Sweet Orange,  
Tripti Vashisth

11:25 am - Macro- and Micronutrient Fertilizing  
Rehabilitation of HLB-affected Citrus Trees,  
Davie Kadyampakeni

11:50 am - Zinc and Potassium Research Update,  
Fernando Alferez

12:15 pm - Lunch and Q & A

# 2025 Highlands County Grove Property Appraisal

As we approach a new tax assessment year come January, 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 (Sam Klatt at 863-402-6667 or [sklatt@hcpao.org](mailto:sklatt@hcpao.org)) 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.

# Julia C. Black Memorial Scholarship Speech Contest

Florida Citrus Mutual is now accepting applications for the 2024-2025 Julia C. Black Memorial Speech Contest & Scholarship. This annual competition, offers high school students in grades 9-12 an opportunity to explore Florida's citrus industry while developing public speaking skills. The theme for this year's contest is "Identify a Pivotal Moment in the Florida Citrus Industry and How It Has Shaped the Industry Today."

The contest features two competition levels: district and state. District competitions will take place in January 2025 and state finals are scheduled for March. Winners at the district level receive cash prizes, while state-level winners can earn scholarship awards up to \$1,000, along with accommodations for the Florida Citrus Industry Annual Conference in June.

The contest and scholarship are named in honor of the late Julia Christine Black, daughter of long-time FCM members Larry and Jenny Black. Julia died in October 2023 at the age of 16 after a sudden cardiac arrest caused by a pericardial infection.

Go to: <https://www.flcitrusmutual.com/educational-programs> to review the details of the competition and to access the application.

# Farms & Ranches Required to File with U.S. Treasury

**UPDATE:** On December 3, 2024, the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas issued a nationwide injunction halting the required filing of Beneficial Ownership Information stemming from the 2021 passage of the Corporate Transparency Act.

*The Corporate Transparency Act (CTA) was included in the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act as part of the Anti-Money Laundering Act, and requires companies to report information to the federal government's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) about the individuals who own or control them. The final rule implementing the legislation was issued in September 2022, and it was made effective as of January 1, 2024, with a deadline for existing businesses as of that date to file their Beneficial Ownership Information (BOI) by December 31, 2024.*

*This recent decision from the U.S. District Court in the Eastern District of Texas is a preliminary injunction that applies to every small business subject to the CTA nationwide. It prohibits the government from enforcing the CTA nationwide, and further finds that "reporting companies need not comply with the CTA's January 1, 2025, BOI reporting deadline pending further order of the Court." This decision is likely to be appealed by the federal government; however, for now, this preliminary injunction provides clear relief for all businesses who have yet to file.*

Most farms and ranches **are required** to file "beneficial ownership" information with the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN), a division of the U.S. Department of the Treasury. In 2021, Congress passed a law called the Corporate Transparency Act that requires businesses to report the identity of their owners with the goal of reducing financial crime. Unfortunately, many small businesses like farms and ranches are required to comply with this requirement.

**Who must file:** Any producer whose farm or ranch employs 20 employees or less, is a corporation, limited liability company (LLC), partnership, or was formed as another type of entity by filing a document with the secretary of state or similar state office is required to file a Beneficial Ownership Report with FinCEN.

**When to file:** Companies that were registered before January 1, 2024, have until January 1, 2025, to file their report. Any companies created between January 1, 2024, and January 1, 2025, have 90 days from their creation or registration with the state to submit this report to FinCEN. Additionally, any updates or corrections to beneficial ownership information must be submitted within 30 days.

**Where to file:** To comply with the Corporate Transparency Act, you must fill out a form online at <https://www.fincen.gov/boi>. The form will require your name, date of birth, residential or business address, and a unique identifying number like your driver's license or passport number.

Producers are encouraged to consult with their attorneys to determine if the CTA applies. Penalties for non-compliance can include a \$500 per late day fine, up to \$10,000 in fines, or even prison sentences for refusing to comply with the law.

**Resources:** For more information, visit <https://www.fincen.gov/boi> or review FinCEN's Small Entity Compliance Guide at <https://www.fincen.gov/boi/small-entity-compliance-guide>. This information is not professional advice, and you should always consult with a tax professional and/or attorney for advice as to whether the Corporate Transparency Act applies to you.

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# Programs Available to Ag Producers in Florida's Heartland

**United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)** has announced the EQIP Disaster Assistance Program in response to hurricanes Debby, Helene and Milton. Eligible practices include replacement of high tunnels, replacement of crop mulching (plastic), replacement of individual protective screens on young citrus trees, tree/brush removal, repair and replacement of damaged center pivots, etc. For more information, contact Carlos Torres at (863) 863-451-3428 ([carlos.torres2@usda.gov](mailto:carlos.torres2@usda.gov)) or Kayla Nickerson at 863-451-3420 ([knickerson@highlandsswcd.org](mailto:knickerson@highlandsswcd.org)). The application period is Oct. 18<sup>th</sup> – Dec. 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Applications will be batched and ranked every two weeks so that producers may begin work as soon as possible. A waiver to start work early may be obtained and is required before commencement, though not a guarantee of funding. General cost share program applications are accepted year-round.

If your Ag operation is impacted by a natural disaster, **Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Risk Management Agency (RMA)** also offer disaster assistance programs and Federal crop insurance. Contact your local USDA Service Center to report losses and learn more about program options available to assist in their recovery from crop, land, infrastructure and livestock losses and damages. On farmers.gov, learn more on our Protection and Recovery webpage at: <https://www.farmers.gov/protection-recovery> or by using the Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool at: <https://www.farmers.gov/protection-recovery/disaster-tool>.

The **Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD)** is offering FARMS (Facilitating Agricultural Resource Management Systems) - an agricultural cost-share reimbursement program that reduces groundwater withdrawals from the Upper Floridan aquifer through conservation and alternative water supply best management practices (BMPs). For a list of qualifications and examples of project types, visit: <https://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/business/agriculture/facilitating-agricultural-resource-management-systems-farms>. For additional information, contact Carole Estes at (941) 404-1452 or [Carole.Estes@WaterMatters.org](mailto:Carole.Estes@WaterMatters.org). Applications accepted year-round.

**Highlands County Extension has partnered with the Highlands Soil & Water Conservation District** to provide 5 free soil/water tests and 2 free tissue tests to Highlands County producers through the AgriTest Initiative. For more information, contact the Highlands County Extension Office at (863) 402-6540. Applications accepted year-round.

For help navigating the various programs and cost share assistance for your agricultural operation, please stop by the Highlands Soil and Water Conservation District Office or call Kayla Nickerson at (863) 451-3420.



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# HCCGA Membership Dues

HCCGA members should have received their 2025 membership dues renewal statements in the mail in mid-December. If you do not receive your renewal invoice by December 16<sup>th</sup> or so, or have questions about your membership; please contact the HCCGA office (863) 385-8091 at your earliest convenience.

Both Grower and Associate dues for 2025 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 2025.***

# 2025 HCCGA Annual Meeting

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

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 2025 and recognize the major sponsors of our 2024 Golf Tournament and Sporting Clays Fun Shoot fundraisers.

All Association members should receive an invitation and reservation form in the mail shortly after the first of the year. The dinner will be open to all current 2025 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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# Winter Weather Watch

The 2024-25 edition of the Winter Weather Watch program is now active. 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 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 our own meteorologist David Faysash.

When freezing temperatures are predicted in our area additional updates will include the afternoon zone forecast and the modified sunset brunt minimum temperature equation. We will also provide the weekly citrus leaf freezing temperatures (also available on FAWN) and the 2024-25 Winter Weather Watch manual.

Subscriptions for the Winter Weather Watch program are \$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 by email at [j.spencer@ufl.edu](mailto:j.spencer@ufl.edu).

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# UF/IFAS Flower Bud Induction Advisories

The 2024-2025 Flower Bud Advisories provided by Dr. Tripti Vashisth (UF/IFAS CREC) have begun. These advisories will be published biweekly through March 2025. 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.

## **Flowering Bud Induction Advisory #1 (11/25/24) Highlights**

**Season Forecast:** This winter and spring (2025) are predicted to be a weak La Niña which means Florida will experience temperatures warmer than normal and rainfall lower than normal. Drought conditions are also likely to develop late in the winter and early spring as numerous fair and warm days are anticipated. Overall, we are in for a warm and dry winter weather!

**See ADVISORIES on page 21**

## ADVISORIES, Con't from page 20

Under these conditions, enough hours below 68 °F are likely to accumulate to induce an economic level of flower buds but intermediate warm periods during the winter can lead to multiple flower cohorts and a very prolonged bloom. On the positive side, if dry weather prevails during the bloom period, there could potentially be lower incidence of post bloom fruit drop.

**Current Condition:** Currently, citrus producing regions have low flower bud induction, which is low accumulation of inductive hours (IH), temperatures below 68 °F or 20 °C. Accumulation of more cool temperatures and hopefully a quick turn to cooler temperatures is needed to prevent early and prolonged flowering and good spring flowering for upcoming season. However, later interruption by warm weather is going to be an issue.

### **Flowering related management considerations for HLB-affected trees:**

- DO NOT drought stress HLB-affected trees even though drought stress promotes flower induction and suppresses vegetative growth, you should not risk current crop due to additional drought stress. Drought stress can exacerbate fruit drop. Daily, lower volume irrigations to minimize fall drought stress is suggested, especially when the weather is warm.
- Flowering enhancing fertilizer to increase the number of flowers is NOT suggested for severely HLB-affected trees as they are very less likely to benefit because of 2 reasons: (1) HLB-affected trees have more dead wood therefore, there are fewer buds available to become flowers, interestingly a good branch of severe HLB trees has same flowering potential as mild HLB trees. So additional flowering promoting fertilizer is not needed. (2) High twig dieback and low fruitlet retention is the main concern with severe HLB trees in regards to fruit set. Only 2% of the total flowers turn into harvestable crop therefore, pushing the tree to flower more is not advisable as that is likely to waste trees' energy and resources in extra flowers.
- Gibberellic acid (GA) sprays can be used to suppress early spring flowering, but the timing of application is critical for GA to be effective. GA should be applied before warm temperatures (that is before differentiation begins). Previous research on HLB-affected trees in 2017-2018 (a La Niña winter) has shown that when GA applied monthly in fall, early flowering was suppressed. Therefore, if you have a weak crop load and are forecasted to have warm spells, GA application can be considered to suppress off season flowering.

With current weather conditions and predictions, GA spray to suppress early flowering is advisable; especially, if the crop has been harvested in December. Suppressing early flowering will synchronize flowering and will improve leaf production (thus better source to sink ratio). Better canopy = better fruit production on HLB-affected trees. **Do Not** spray GA after first of January to manage flowering.



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H.C. Commissioner Arlene Tuck  
H.C. Commissioner Chris Campbell  
H.C. Commissioner Don E. Elwell  
H.C. Commissioner Kevin Roberts  
H.C. Commissioner Scott Kirouac  
H.C. Economic Development  
H.C. Tax Collector Eric T. Zwayner  
Haifa North America  
Hancock Citrus, Inc.  
Harrell's LLC  
Hartman Farms  
Harplyn, Inc.  
Heartland Ag Capital & Consulting  
Heartland National Bank  
Helena Agri Enterprises, LLC  
Hicks Oil Co., Inc.  
Highlands County Cattleman's Assoc., Inc.  
Highlands County Farm Bureau  
Highlands Radio Group  
Himrod Citrus Nursery  
Home & Commercial Irrigation, Inc.  
Hood Citrus Caretaking  
Howard Fertilizer & Chemical Company, Inc.  
Johnson Harvesting, Inc.  
Kahn Citrus Management, LLC/Murphy Ag Solutions  
KeyPlex  
Krause Services  
L. Dicks, Inc.  
Lake Placid Caretakers, Inc.  
Lake Placid Citrus Cooperative  
Laye's Tire Service  
Life Soils Florida, LLC  
Lisa Sherman, CPA, PA  
Living Water Services, Inc.  
Locher Environmental Technology, LLC  
Llana Ranches, LP  
M.E. Stephens & Sons Fruit Co., Inc.  
Magna-Bon II, LLC  
Maxijet, Inc.
- MetLife Investment Management  
Mike Hurst Citrus Services, Inc.  
Miller Chemical & Fertilizer  
MoonBeam Land Company  
Morgan Stanley Wealth Management  
Murphy Ag Solutions  
Newton Crouch, Inc.  
NovaSource/Tessenderlo Kerley  
Nufarm Americas, Inc.  
NUTECH  
Nutrien Ag Solutions  
OK Corral Gun Club  
Ole South Auto Salvage, Inc.  
Pantuso, Inc.  
Patriot Welding Supply  
Peace River Citrus Products, Inc.  
Perricone Fort Pierce  
Performance Nutrition/ LidoChem  
Petteway Growers  
Phillip Rucks Citrus Nursery, Inc.  
Pines Law Group  
Plant Food Systems  
PGIM Real Estate Finance  
Quail Creek Sporting Ranch  
Rabo Agri Finance  
Rogers Petroleum, Inc.  
Rovensa Next  
SEVEN Sebring Raceway Hotel  
Shutts & Bowen, LLP  
John F. Smoak and Sons  
Smoak Groves, Inc.  
Somers Irrigation, Inc.  
Southeast Ag Solutions  
Southeast Green Space, LLC  
South Florida State College  
South Ridge Abstract and Title Co.  
South State Bank  
Southern Citrus Nurseries  
Southern Gardens Grove Corp.  
Southridge Citrus Nursery, Inc.  
Stallings Crop Insurance Corporation  
SunRidge Harvesting Company  
SVN Saunders Ralston Dantzier Real Estate  
Syngenta  
Taylor Oil Company, Inc.  
Tessenderlo Kerley, Inc.  
The Avanti Company  
The Story Companies  
TIMAC Agro USA, Inc.  
Tim Hurner  
Trademark Nitrogen  
Tradewinds Power Corp  
Tree Defender  
Triangle Chemical Co.  
Triangle Hardware  
TriEst Ag Group  
Tropicana Products, Inc.  
Valent  
W.A. Williams Citrus Nursery & Service Inc.  
Wards Nursery, Inc.  
Waypoints Financial  
Wedgworth's, Inc.  
Wells and Associates Insurance  
Wicks, Brown, Williams and Co., CPAs  
Yara North America, Inc.



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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*

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