

Citrus connection



HIGHLANDS COUNTY CITRUS GROWERS President's Column by Riley McKenna

It is truly an honor to have the opportunity to lead- and most importantly serve- as the 2025 Highlands County Citrus Growers Association (HCCGA) President. The Florida Citrus Industry holds more than just a career of mine but rather an all-consuming passion. From the time I was child, I have been able to see first-hand just how strong, resilient, and hard-working the members of this industry are. I'd like to extend my sincerest gratitude to them and to the growers who have come before me who cultivated and shaped this industry. They have helped provide me the opportunity to learn, grow, and now lead within this tenacious industry.

I would also like to thank Bert Harris for his leadership during 2024 as HCCGA's President. Bert offered invaluable insight to our industry through his profound knowledge of land rights and expertise in county ordinances. I hope to build on the incredible work that he and this association has previously accomplished.

As I reflect on my experience as a hands-on grove manager, I look forward to sharing my perspectives throughout this year's president's column. While it is no secret that our industry continues to face challenges, I make an active choice to focus on the positives and a pathway forward for our industry.

Three years into OTC and a notably consistent winter we enter this year's bloom witnessing signs of improvement! We are seeing these improvements not only in our own fruit tests but those of our fellow growers also! Valencias are demonstrating some of the best quality we've seen in recent years. Although OTC has not yet delivered the impact we have hoped for in extinguishing greening, it has successfully halted the decline in yields and quality we have experienced in previous years. I am excited to see what our third year of OTC practices will bring. I remain confident that proper grove management and a compliant Mother Nature will yield major positive results for our trees. It is important to remember that OTC is not a miracle solution. We must continue to employ the best and most efficient materials and methods available, particularly in this crucial year following a hurricane.

While growers focus on growing the best crop of fruit they can, research efforts to optimize OTC and identify other potential antimicrobials continue. I am excited to see what emerges from these research efforts as I believe these will be results that we can quickly bring into our existing horticultural practices.

Advancements like the *Grove First Initiative* and other ongoing experiments to build a better OTC mouse trap are paving the way for more effective solutions. Other areas that interest researchers and growers alike are stabilizing OTC and attempting to reduce the tree's stress. It's exciting to see collaboration between growers and researchers because I believe it is *vital* to ensure we can continue to preserve and improve every acre of citrus within Florida.

Fellow board members Jarred Eddy, Trevor Murphy and I, recently were given the incredible opportunity to visit Brazil and tour several of their successful groves. While some of the Brazilian practices are not directly transferable, several key take aways and knowledge was gained. Most notably, we must focus on the fundamentals:

- a. Proper ground fertilization
- b. Efficient foliar nutrition
- c. Timely psyllid sprays to reduce reinfection

When these fundamental practices are implemented in combination with the current OTC practices and more simple and grower-friendly BMPs, I have the utmost confidence we can begin to rebuild and restore much of Florida's citrus acreage.

As an industry, we must continue to evolve and where there is change - there's opportunity! As an industry, each of us must strive to identify our niche and grow to excel in it. If we continue to work hard and work together, we can move forward and build a sustainable future for the Florida's citrus industry.

FEB 2025

- HCCGA Annual Meeting
- Citrus Production & Acreage
- Zinc & Fruit Drop
- FL Citrus Industry Conference
- HCCGA Golf Day
- BMP Manual
- Injecting HLB Trees
- CRAFT Updates
- Oxytetracycline Lessons
- Property Appraisers Update
- Beneficial Ownership Filing
- New Varieties

Riley McKenna



6419 US Hwy 27 South
 Sebring, FL 33876-5712
 863.385.8091
www.hccga.com
admin@hccga.com

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2025 Calendar of Events

March 27

Ag Safety Day @ Bert Harris Jr. Ag Center - Sebring

April 8

Florida Citrus Growers Institute @ SFSC - Avon Park

April 24

HCCGA Golf Day @ Sun N Lake Golf Club

June 11-13

Annual Citrus Conference @ Coconut Point Hyatt - Bonita Springs

August 20-21

Citrus & Specialty Crop Expo @ FL. State Fairgrounds - Tampa

December 6

HCCGA Citrus Fun Shoot @ Quail Creek Sporting Ranch

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



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Executive Director's Report

BY RAY ROYCE

Thank you to all of the sponsors who made our 35th HCCGA Annual Meeting possible. I believe that our Association's attending members, guests and invited dignitaries enjoyed an evening of great fellowship, and perhaps even learned a little bit from our guest speakers. Thank you to Dr. Michelle Heck, Tanishka Aglave, Morgan Porter, Steven Hall and Matt Joyner for the investment of your time with our folks, and updating them on a wide range of issues affecting our industry.



If you have a NRCS (or other federally funded or matching program) cost share project you are involved with – you should probably check in with the folks you are dealing with before expending any more resources. Federal funding freezes and/or decreases may affect your ability to get compensated – even if you have an existing contract potentially. Also staffing levels have already been decreased in the offices administering these projects – so make sure you know who you are dealing with now. I am sure that not all projects will be affected – but it would be prudent to check in before committing additional resources that you are relying on reimbursement for.

I want to thank Lisa Jensen, Steve Smith & Peter McClure (FDACS) and the others involved over the past year for getting the new Citrus BMP manual reviewed, revised and into effect. I believe you will find the 2025 Citrus Manual to be much easier to understand, and comply with, as you formulate and carry out your production programs.

On Tuesday, April 8th, the **Annual Citrus Growers Institute** will be held at South Florida State College in Avon Park. At this time, 25 researchers have committed to participating in the event. Additional program and registration information should be available soon.

Your Association's **2025 Golf Day**, which is sponsored by our good friends at **Heartland National Bank**, is coming up soon on Thursday, April 24th at the **SUN 'N LAKE Golf Club** in Sebring. We will have a great lunch prior to play, plenty of liquid refreshments on the course and some hors d'oeuvres afterwards while we celebrate the award winners and give away the raffle prizes – so no one should go home hungry or thirsty!

So if you are a golfer, please make plans to join us for a great afternoon of outdoor fun and fellowship. There is a registration flier in this month's newsletter, or give us a call at the office if you have any questions, or would like to help by sponsoring a hole contest or some of the event's raffle drawing prizes.

The **2025 Annual Citrus Conference** in Bonita Springs will take place on June 11th - 13th. Now is the time to make hotel room reservations at the Hyatt and get pre-registered with Florida Citrus Mutual if you want to participate in this great industry gathering.

Citrus Expo 2025 is scheduled for August 20th and 21st at the Florida State Fairgrounds in Tampa. The planning for Expo's educational seminars will soon get underway, with your Association helping in that regard. These sessions are put on solely for the growers' benefit, so please weigh in with me on what type of information you are seeking and/or which speakers you are most interested in hearing from.

Our monthly newsletters, and some other HCCGA operations, are possible due to a large extent by those companies that advertise in the Association's newsletter. I say that for two reasons – one to say thank you to those companies that are making an investment in our Association and secondly, if you would like to advertise in the Citrus Connection newsletter – just contact me about details.

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.

Thanks, Ray



Info Notes

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>.

2024 Citrus Expo Presentations

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

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>

"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>.



2025 HCCGA Annual Meeting

The 35th Annual Meeting of the Highlands County Citrus Growers Association was held at the Seven - Sebring Raceway Hotel on the evening of Thursday, March 6th starting with a social hour followed by dinner, business programming and several guest speakers. Roughly 225 members and guests joined us for a wonderful night of fellowship.

Thank you to all of the sponsoring companies that helped defray the dinner meeting's costs and make the evening possible. We would also like to thank the **Florida Department of Citrus** for sponsoring our social hour and the audio visual aspects of the program.

During the business meeting portion of the meeting, we elected four new Board of Directors members, heard reports from Association officers, installed the Board Officers for 2025 and recognized the major sponsors of our 2024 Golf Tournament and Sporting Clays Fun Shoot fundraisers.

During the dinner program, the Association heard brief reports from guest speakers about the state of our industry including **Morgan McKenna Porter** (*Chair of CRDF*), **Steven Hall** (*Executive Director of CRAFT*) and **Matt Joyner** (*CEO of Florida Citrus Mutual*).

A special guest speaker was an awarding winning 16 year old 10th grade high school student **Tanishka Algave**, who shared a very interesting presentation on her curry leaf extract injection therapy scientific research project.

Our Keynote Speaker this year was **Dr. Michelle Heck** who is the Lead Scientist and Research Molecular Biologist with the Emerging Pests and Pathogens Research Unit of the USDA Agricultural Research Service. Dr. Heck provided the most recent project updates regarding the Grove-First program which she is leading.

Thank you to all that made the investment of their time to be part of HCCGA's 35th Annual Meeting.



2023-2024 Florida Citrus Production & Acreage

A recent report recapped Florida citrus production for the 2023-2024 season. The summary, **Florida Citrus Statistics 2023-2024**, (available at: https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Florida/Publications/Citrus/Citrus_Statistics/2023-24/FCS2024.pdf), was published by FDAC's Division of Fruits and Vegetables. The production statistics for Florida are official estimates of the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Florida Citrus Crop Breakdown

- Oranges constituted 89% of the state's citrus production, grapefruit accounted for 9%, and tangerines and tangelos represented 2%.
- Florida produced 20.2 million boxes of citrus in 2023–24, up 12% from the previous season's 18.1 million boxes.
- Florida's orange production, at 18 million boxes, was up 14% from the previous season.
- Grapefruit utilization in Florida, at 1.79 million boxes, was down 1%.
- Tangerine and tangelo production was down 6%.
- Fresh fruit exports totaled 395,000 four-fifth-bushel cartons, down from 467,000 in 2022–23. Belgium received most of Florida's grapefruit exports.
- Canada accounted for most of Florida's orange and tangerine exports.
- A total of 1.75 million gallons of frozen concentrated orange juice were exported in the 2023–24 season.

Florida Citrus Acreage

- Citrus land fell from 748,555 acres in 2004 — the year before HLB was found in the state - to 274,705 acres in 2024.
- 2024 Florida citrus acreage was down 17% from the prior annual survey. The net loss of 57,551 acres is 14,505 acres more than was lost the previous season.
- New plantings at 4,751 acres were down from the previous season's 6,203.
- All 23 published counties with citrus showed decreases in acreage. Hendry County lost the most acreage, down 12,374 acres from the previous season. Polk County leads in citrus acreage with 58,516 acres, followed by Desoto County at 51,800 acres. Highlands County is third with 40,737 acres.

Citrus Acreage By Variety

- Orange acreage is now at 248,028 acres, down 18% from the previous season.
- Valencia acreage accounts for 63% of the total orange acreage.
- Non-Valencia acreage represents 35%, and the remaining orange acreage is unidentified.
- Grapefruit acreage is now at 14,316 acres, down 10% from the previous season.
- Specialty fruit acreage, at 12,361 acres, is down 6% from the previous season. Tangerines and tangelos account for 58% of the specialty fruit, with 7,189 acres. The remaining specialty fruit acreage is other citrus acreage, with a total of 5,172 acres, or 42%.

See PRODUCTION on page 8

Collaborating with Growers to Develop Programs for Their Needs

For more than 15 years, we've been helping citrus growers combat disease and reduce copper toxicity in the soil with our low-active ingredient copper sulphate pentahydrate. Research by Dr. Kelly Morgan, a Professor of Soil Fertility and Water Management with UF/IFAS, has confirmed that buildup of copper in the soil greatly reduces yields for growers.

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


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

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

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

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

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

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



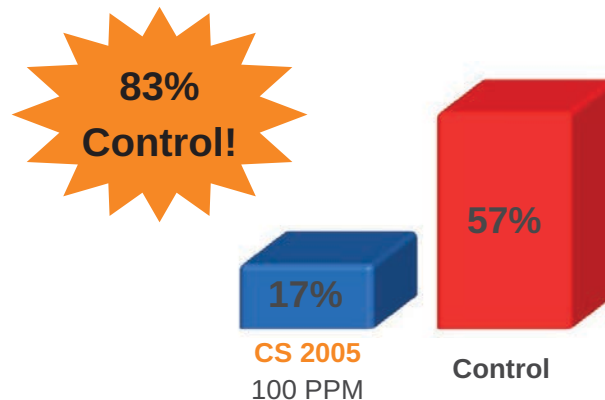
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PRODUCTION, Con't from page 6

Top Citrus Producing Counties

The top five Florida citrus-producing counties in 2023-24 were Polk (3.86 million boxes), DeSoto (3.14 million boxes), Highlands (2.79 million boxes), Hendry (2.37 million boxes) and Hardee (2.27 million boxes). Together, they accounted for 71% of the state's total citrus production.

Production in Other Florida Counties

St. Lucie: 2.1 million boxes
 Collier: 1.2 million boxes
 Indian River: 709,000 boxes
 Charlotte: 396,000 boxes
 Lake: 342,000 boxes
 Osceola: 213,000 boxes
 Manatee: 169,000 boxes
 Okeechobee: 143,000 boxes
 Glades: 103,000 boxes

Lee: 82,000 boxes
 Hillsborough: 51,000 boxes
 Pasco: 41,000 boxes
 Sarasota: 30,000 boxes
 Brevard: 28,000 boxes
 Volusia: 24,000 boxes
 Marion: 22,000 boxes
 Orange: 15,000 boxes
 Seminole: 9,000 boxes
 Other (Citrus, Hernando and Putnam): 19,000 boxes

Source: FDACS



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HIGHLANDS COUNTY AG SAFETY DAY

When? Thursday, March 27 from 7:30AM-3:00PM

Where? Bert J. Harris Jr. Agricultural Center
4509 George Blvd, Sebring, FL 33875

- Worker Protection Standards (WPS)
- Safety Training
- CEU's (max. 4)
- Health Fair
- English & Spanish sessions available
- Breakfast and lunch provided



How much? Tickets cost \$15 per person and pre-registration is required.



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Zinc Increases Yield by Reducing Fruit Drop

Different formulations of zinc applied by foliar spray increase fruit yield by reducing fruit drop in Hamlin and Valencia oranges, according to horticulturist Fernando Alferez. In some cases, he said, potassium enhances the beneficial effects of zinc. He presented his findings during the recent Citrus Nutrition Day event at the UF/IFAS CREC in Lake Alfred.

HLB is a major cause of increased preharvest fruit drop. Other possible causes include loss of root density and off blooms, which are also related to HLB, Alferez reported.

His hypothesis is that auxin levels must be maintained at high levels to avoid fruit abscission triggering and fruit drop. Alferez thinks zinc may modulate fruit physiology and retention by maintaining auxin levels. He added that potassium increases fruit quality.

Key summary points from his presentation were:

- For Valencia fruit yield and quality, particulate zinc treatments increased yield by 53% compared to trees treated with zinc sulfate. Brix was not significantly affected, but the Brix-to-acid ratio was increased.
- A significant increase in Hamlin fruit yield was observed with Ferti-Zinc and Nu-Zinc as compared to zinc sulfate. Hamlin fruit drop was reduced by about 30% in all treatments until December 2024.
- Overall tree health was improved by foliar application of zinc. Particulate zinc formulations (Ferti-Zinc and Nu-Zinc) improved tree health better than zinc sulfate.

Alferez and his team are now assaying zinc applications in oxytetracycline (OTC)-treated trees. Because such trees are in healthier shape, researchers expect better fruit retention and more fruit yield as a result of OTC and zinc treatments.

Alferez is a UF/IFAS associate professor at the SWFREC in Immokalee

Annual Florida Citrus Industry Conference 2025

Just a reminder to save the dates of June 11th-13th 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 fellowship events to enjoy, including the famous slide races, 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.

Conference registration is now open at www.flcitrusmutual.com. Hotel reservations should be made online now at <https://www.hyatt.com/en-US/group-booking/NAPRN/G-FFMC> to take advantage of the \$169/night Conference rate. Hotel rates will increase to the prevailing rate after May 20th.

2025 HCCGA Golf Day

The 2025 Highlands County Citrus Growers Association's Annual Golf Day, presented by **Heartland National Bank** has been scheduled for the afternoon of **Thursday, April 24th** this year, at the **SUN 'N LAKE Golf Club** in Sebring. So make plans to join us for a fun day on the golf course by utilizing the registration flier in this newsletter to get signed up!

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 in your handicap class with others. In addition there will be gift certificate prizes for the top 3 teams in each of the three flights.

We also have some contest sponsorships available at \$150.00 each if you would like to get your company some great recognition both at the event and in our monthly newsletter. Just give Ray a call at the HCCGA office for more info.

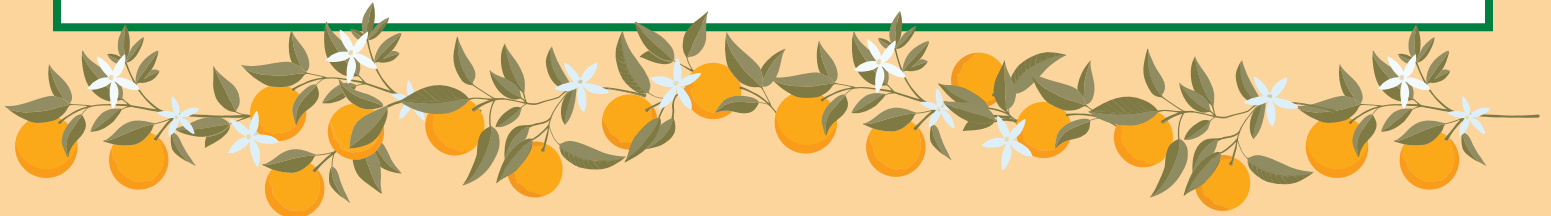
New Citrus BMP Manual

The new Citrus BMP Manual went into effect on March 4th. The manual replaces the 2012 Citrus BMP Manual that growers have previously been required to comply with. The new manual has been simplified, and is much more concise in nature and user friendly.

The good news is that citrus growers who are currently enrolled under the 2012 Manual do not need to do anything, or sign a new Notice of Intent, at this time in regards to the new manual. "Re-enrollment" under the provisions of the new manual will take place either when a producer is undergoing an Implementation Verification (IV) site visit in the next year or two with FDACS staff, or if you make application for a cost share program.

All of Florida's agricultural BMP manuals have been reviewed and revised over the past year. The Cattle, Sod, Dairy, Vegetable, Poultry, Specialty Fruit & Nut and Small Farms manuals are also already in force. The Nursery BMP manual will go into effect on March 12th.

All of the new agricultural BMP's can be found on the FDACS website at: www.fdacs.gov/Agriculture-Industry/Water/Agricultural-Best-Management-Practices.



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CITRUS DAY

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1:00 Shotgun Start

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Frequent Irrigation Is Critical for HLB-Affected Trees

By Tripti Vashisth and Mary Sutton

HLB-affected trees have small and weak root systems. These trees often experience water and nutrient deficit. However, not all HLB-affected trees experience the same impact. Trees with severe HLB symptoms will have higher root loss and water deficit than trees with mild HLB symptoms.

The water deficit exacerbates during spring, which is often the low rainfall period in Florida and coincides with significant growth in trees. Flowering, fruit set, fruit growth and leaf growth require high water availability. The growth of fruit can be attributed to cell division and enlargement, which increases the number and size of cells, respectively, during the first two months following the beginning of fruit set (stage I of fruit development) and about four to six months thereafter (stage II). Fruit size increases rapidly because of water accumulation in cells during fruit development. Additionally, there is a link between fruit size and fruit drop. Small fruit are more prone to drop from the tree than large fruit.

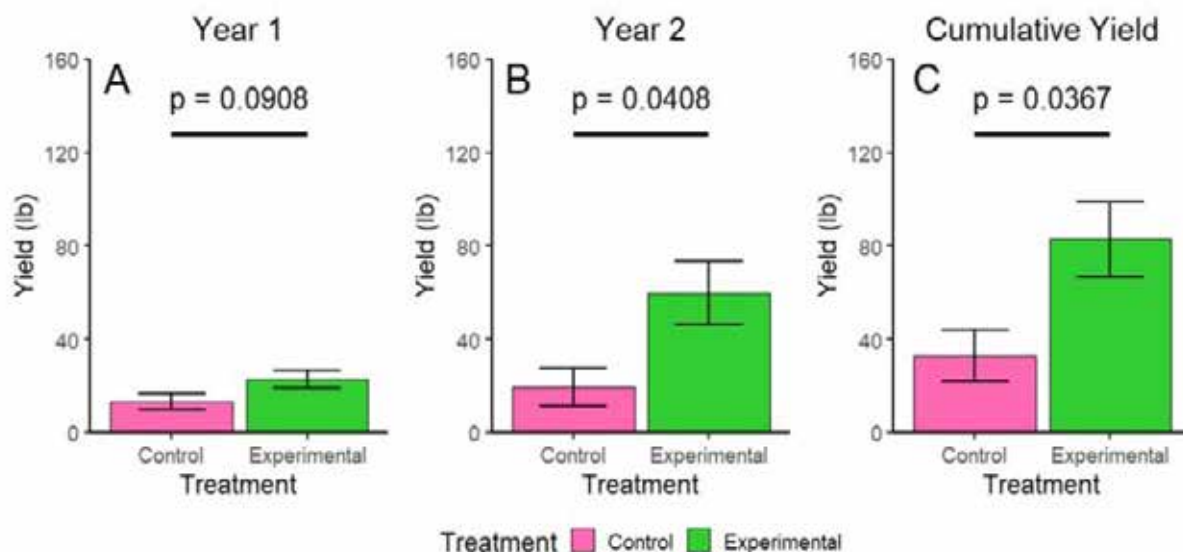


Figure 1. Harvest data shows that frequent irrigation with the same amount of total water significantly improved yield.

In an experimental field trial for two consecutive years, UF/IFAS researchers found that frequent irrigation produced more than double yield (Figure 1) than conventional irrigation (every other day irrigation). The two treatments received the same amount of water over time but differed in how often they received water and how much water they received at a time.

The trees in both treatments had similar canopy volumes and densities before treatments were implemented. At the conclusion of the study, the experimental trees had significantly larger canopies than the control (27 m³ vs. 22 m³). Similarly, the experimental trees had significantly denser canopies than the control (83% vs. 75% light interception). In citrus, canopy density and health is often determined by measuring the amount of light that is intercepted by the canopy. The more light that is intercepted, the denser the canopy.

See *IRRIGATION* on page 15

IRRIGATION, Con't from page 14

Adequate water supply during spring and early summer (low rainfall period) is critical to ensure uninterrupted fruit development and growth for better fruit retention. The more well-watered status of frequently irrigated trees is likely to contribute to higher reproductive and vegetative growth and significantly higher yields.

Tripti Vashisth is associate center director and associate professor at the UF/IFAS Citrus Research and Education Center in Lake Alfred. Mary Sutton is an assistant professor and citrus Extension specialist at the University of Georgia in Tifton.

CRAFT Foundation Update

CRAFT Cycle 6 and ETT Round 3 Update

The CRAFT Foundation received applications for almost 10,000 acres of new planting proposals and applications for nearly 47,000 acres for inclusion in the existing tree therapy (ETT) program. This demand exceeded the funding available for both programs. The selected applicants have received their contracts with instructions on how to complete and return their contracts. The deadline to submit ETT contracts has now passed and all CRAFT New Planting contracts had to be returned by February 28, 2025.

Any applications that were not selected for funding during this initial review have been added to the waitlist. As funding becomes available, additional contracts may be extended to applicants on the waitlist. The CRAFT team is excited to work with our participating growers as they get started with these new projects. If you have any questions, please contact Steven Hall, CRAFT Executive Director, at Steven@craftfdn.org or (863) 333-2931.

New CRAFT Data Portal

The CRAFT program was established in 2019 with a mission focused on applied research through grower-driven field trials to determine the efficacy of various HLB treatments in commercial citrus groves. A critical part of this mission includes collecting data on these field trials and developing an integrated data management system to present the results. Six-years later, with over 20,000 acres of new plantings and over 80,000 acres of additional Existing Tree Therapies trials under contract, the program is still dedicated to achieving its mission.

A recent milestone for the program is the launch of the new CRAFT Data Portal. As part of the CRAFT mission, we rely for our grower's commitment to collect and submit your production information into the data portal. Growers may find it convenient to submit their data in real time or on a quarterly basis.

Growers may access the CRAFT Data Portal via the CRAFT website at <https://craftfdn.org>. All growers have received an email providing them with their new user information for the portal. A video user guide has been created to assist growers with the submission process, which is available at <https://youtu.be/GdadnWu5u-s>. Please contact CRAFT Assistant Program Manager Tina Buice at Tina@craftfdn.org if you have any questions.

Lessons From Oxytetracycline Injection Trials

By Ute Albrecht, Carol Tardivo, Gabriel Pugina, Larissa Nunes, Jasmine de Freitas and Gerardo Moreno

Since the approval of oxytetracycline (OTC) injection to manage citrus greening (huanglongbing, HLB) in Florida, the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) plant physiology team at the Southwest Florida Research and Education Center (SWFREC) has completed various research trials with multiple years of observations in different commercial production environments. In nearly all field trials, trees improved significantly in response to the injections in terms of fruit yield, fruit quality and juice quality. This article summarizes the most important findings and lessons learned from completed and ongoing studies.

TREE AGE AND VARIETIES

Field trials were conducted on trees ranging in age from 4 to 18 years. Regardless of the age, trees responded positively to the injections. Generally, larger relative increases in fruit yield were observed for younger trees (4 to 6 years old) than for older trees. Depending on the OTC rate, young trees responded with up to three-fold increases in yield. Responses in trials with 6- to 12-year-old trees and 18- to 19-year-old trees ranged from 25% to 60%. When two years of injections were completed, increases were even higher.

Aside from tree age, tree responses were affected by the location of the trial, grove care, scion and rootstock variety, and other factors. Most trials were conducted with Valencias, but Hamlins and Duncan grapefruits also responded positively to the injections.

APPLICATION RATES

The term 'rate' is often referred to as the concentration of OTC [e.g., 5,500 parts per million (ppm) or 11,000 ppm], which does not indicate the actual amount of OTC a tree receives. For example, if 100 milliliters of a 5,500 ppm or 11,000 ppm OTC solution is injected, the amount of OTC the tree receives is 0.55 or 1.1 grams, respectively. If only 50 milliliters is injected of either solution, the tree receives 0.275 or 0.55 gram of OTC, respectively. To avoid confusion, 'rate' is expressed here as the amount (grams) of OTC delivered per tree per year.

For young trees, the responses to the injections were better the more OTC was injected. For example, when trees received 0.15 gram of OTC per year, the yield increased by 20% to 40%. But when they received 0.75 gram of OTC per year, the yield doubled or tripled in comparison to non-injected trees. The same principle applied to the fruit and juice quality: More OTC resulted in a larger fruit size, a better peel color, a better juice color, a higher Brix and a higher Brix/acid ratio.

In older trees, higher rates (1.1 to 1.65 grams of OTC) generally resulted in higher yields and better juice quality than lower rates (0.55 to 0.825 gram of OTC), but differences among rates were not prominent. However, when the amount of OTC per tree was divided into two or three portions and delivered evenly spaced around the trunk, the efficacy increased considerably, regardless of the rate. This means that injecting smaller amounts of OTC on two (or more) sides of the trunk is more effective than injecting a large amount on only one side of the trunk.

In 18-year-old Hamlin and Valencia trees, injection of 0.825 gram of OTC each on two opposite sides of the trunk (1.65 grams of OTC per tree total) increased fruit yield by 32% (Hamlin) and 48% (Valencia). The pounds solids per box of fruit increased from 4.3 to 4.9 (Hamlin) and from 4.4 to 5.1 (Valencia).

Higher OTC rates increased the amount of OTC detected in the (whole) fruits at harvest. Residues were below the maximum allowed tolerance when injections were completed by June and the interval between injection and harvest was 180 days or longer. The maximum allowed tolerance of OTC administered by injection is 10 parts per billion.

See LESSONS on page 17

LESSONS, Con't from page 16

INJECTION TIMING, METHOD AND LOCATION

Injections that were administered in different months (March to September) were all effective. In fact, injecting later in the year resulted in a higher Brix than injecting earlier. However, when injections were performed in August or September, OTC residues in the fruit increased considerably, even when there were 180 days between injection and harvest. It is therefore advised to have all injections completed by July.

When comparing injections using syringe-type injectors (e.g., Chemjet Tree Injectors) and FLEXInject injectors, both produced equal results in terms of yield and fruit/juice quality.

Regarding trunk injury, injectors with smaller tips are preferred, especially for young trees. Two sizes of tips are available for the FLEXInject injectors, requiring a 13/64-inch or a 17/64-inch drill bit. Chemjet injectors are used with an 11/64-inch drill bit. When injecting young trees, a smaller drill bit will cause considerably less trunk injury (like bark cracking) than a larger one. Recurring injections should never be performed into the same injection site.

Although both scion and rootstock injection are effective in terms of yield and fruit quality, injecting into the scion may result in a higher frequency of bark cracking and longer cracks than injecting into the rootstock. This is especially true for young trees. Aside from genetic differences between scion and rootstock, the smaller diameter of the scion may be the main reason for the higher incidence of cracking.

Older trees exhibit considerably less bark cracking, regardless of whether injections are performed into the scion or rootstock. When the trunk of the tree is short, injections are better made into the rootstock to give the OTC more time to disperse before reaching the scaffold branches, thus reducing sectoring.

OTHER FINDINGS

Phytotoxic effects (mostly leaf yellowing) were observed in response to injection in some but not all trials, regardless of the month in which they were performed. Most phytotoxic effects were moderate and only temporary. Severe effects, like leaf and fruit drop, were rare and restricted to small sectors of the canopy (those closest to the injection site).

Although not eliminated, phytotoxicity was reduced when the OTC was delivered in two portions on opposite sides of the trunk. Administering smaller amounts of OTC on two or three points around the trunk also reduced sectoring.

Phytotoxicity is not related to the pH of the solution. The solubility of the OTC decreases greatly above a pH of 2, and the dissolved OTC deteriorates within hours, especially under hot conditions.

Lastly, it must be kept in mind that bacterial reductions caused by one injection are not permanent. Controlling the psyllid vector remains essential for HLB management. Naturally, good tree care is important to prepare trees for injection and to help with recovery.

Acknowledgments: The authors thank the Citrus Research and Development Foundation and U.S. Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture for financial support.

Ute Albrecht (ualbrecht@ufl.edu) is an associate professor; Caroline Tardivo, Gabriel Pugina and Larissa Nunes are Ph.D. candidates; and Jasmine de Freitas and Gerardo Moreno are biological scientists, all at the UF/IFAS SWFREC in Immokalee.



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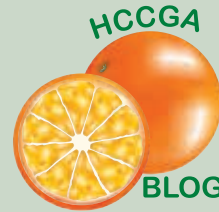
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HC Property Appraiser's Office Update

Last year the Florida Department of Revenue updated its guidelines for the appraisal of agricultural property. One of the changes to the original guidelines (first published in 1982) relates to how the base land value for citrus groves is calculated.

Originally, this value was based on a quasi-cost approach representing "costs incurred to engineer or develop raw acreage." In the new guidelines, the methodology has shifted to an income approach representing "the income ability of land with all improvements in place for growing citrus."

Our office staff has taken this change into consideration in developing the 2025 citrus base land value. As a result, the citrus base land value will be reduced from \$1,500/acre (where it has been for many years) to \$1,000/acre. We will continue to update this number based on the required 5-year average as it follows the citrus market.

***C. Raymond McIntyre, C.F.A.
Highlands County Property Appraiser***



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 or contact Steven Hall - 863.682-1115 or Steven@CRAFTfdn.org.

Requirement to File Beneficial Ownership Information with U.S. Treasury

Beneficial ownership reporting requirements are back in effect for most companies, with a new deadline of **March 21, 2025**. The requirement to file “beneficial ownership” information with the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN), a division of the U.S. Department of the Treasury is due to the Corporate Transparency Act that requires businesses to report the identity of their owners with the goal of reducing financial crime.

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 **March 21, 2025**, to file their report. Any companies created after January 1, 2024 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.

UPDATE – The U.S. Treasury Department announced on March 3rd “that it will not impose penalties now or in the future if companies fail to register for the agency’s beneficial ownership information database.” So who knows what will ultimately happen.





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New Varieties Released

By Peter Chaires

On October 24, 2024, the University of Florida's (UF) Cultivar Release Committee unanimously approved the release of seven citrus varieties to Florida Foundation Seed Producers, Inc.

Florida Statutes now require that, before being released to the general public, any new variety of citrus developed as a result of any research or study accomplished using any percentage of funds from the State Treasury, as well as any technology that enhances the marketability of new or current citrus fruit varieties, must be made available as a first option for licensing and commercialization for a period of 90 days, under commercially reasonable terms, exclusively to the [Florida Department of Citrus](#) (FDOC) or its designee. If the FDOC or its designee exercises such exclusive license, the Florida Citrus Commission (FCC) may retain the exclusivity for up to eight years after the date of execution.

Considering the high level of interest in some of these varieties and the fact that plant material for three of these varieties will be rapidly scaled-up by the state and is also approved for inclusion in Cycle 6 of the Citrus Research and Field Trial program, the FCC approved the FDOC exercising its first option for six of the seven varieties. In doing so, it also affirmed [New Varieties Development & Management Corp.](#) (NVDMC) as its designee.

At the time of printing, the FDOC and NVDMC had solidified their arrangement, and details of the arrangement between NVDMC and [Florida Foundation Seed Producers](#) had not yet been concluded. All parties wish to move this process forward expeditiously. Information will soon be forthcoming to stakeholders. The process of commercialization will be as simple and straightforward as possible, while meeting the needs of nurseries, growers, UF, FDOC and NVDMC.

The varieties included in this program include:

1. **N14-10 Hamlin** – tolerant to HLB with improved color, Brix and soluble solids in the presence of HLB
2. **OLL-DC-3-40 sweet orange** – tolerant to HLB with improved Brix, color and juice scores in the presence of HLB
3. **OLL-DC-3-36 sweet orange** – tolerant to HLB with improved Brix, color and juice scores in the presence of HLB
4. **C4-10-42 mandarin hybrid** – tolerant to HLB and useful for processing and blending into not-from-concentrate (NFC) orange juice.
5. **RBA 13-18 mandarin hybrid** – tolerant to HLB and useful for processing and blending into NFC orange juice
6. **Orange 14 rootstock** – performed well under HLB pressure

The only variety not included among those approved by the Cultivar Release Committee was a hybrid lime.

Peter Chaires is executive director of New Varieties Development & Management Corp.



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- 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
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