



Citrus connection



HIGHLANDS COUNTY CITRUS GROWERS President's Column by Riley McKenna

No Silver Bullet, But Real Momentum

I wouldn't be the first to say that talking about the ongoing issue of HLB is a lot like treading water or beating a dead horse. Unfortunately, a silver bullet does not exist, at least at this point in time, to help us rescue the citrus industry overnight as much as we wish it did.

For years now, researchers and growers have talked about the detrimental effects of HLB and hopes of finding "another arrow in the quiver"—and to be honest, many of us are even tired of hearing that phrase! I, however, am proud to say that exhausting as it is, I am thankful for those difficult conversations because over a period of time we have discovered arrows, tools, and strategies that have begun making a real difference.

Today, one of the biggest challenges we all face are the arrows being pulled directly from our bank accounts. Rising production costs are impossible to ignore, and it's getting harder to feel hopeful when the financial strain is growing, often more than our groves are!

That's why the potential funding for the CRAFT Reset Program is so important. If we can get it across the finish line, the program would serve as a powerful catalyst for recovery and growth to growers and nurseries across the state, aiming to help reset groves, replant trees, and regain some footing.

Long before greening ever showed up, there was a saying: *"If you're not resetting your groves, you're not in the long-term business of growing citrus"*. That sentiment still holds true... maybe even more so now.

With the added support of the CRAFT program, we'll have the opportunity to get more trees in the ground and finally start leveraging the full range of arrows we've gathered over the last 20 years.

The new rootstocks in the pipeline for release over the next few years - both CRISPR and traditionally bred - are definitely exciting, but I am here to convey **we can't afford to wait**. Now is the time to use the momentum that Senator Albritton has built. By bringing our existing groves back to solid tree counts, we can not only increase box yields, but also improve efficiency across grove management. The discovery of our silver bullet may still be a few years away - but with the right support, we have a chance to fire with a full quiver.

As always, I'd like to thank Ray Royce for his continued efforts to support members of this association, our board of directors for stepping up on behalf of our region's growers, and a special thank you to Senator Ben Albritton for his perseverance and dedication to Florida citrus growers.

Riley McKenna

JUNE 2025

- Citrus Seminars
- Upcoming CRAFT Programs
- FSA State Exec. Director
- Oxytetracycline Injections
- FL Legislative Funding
- Citrus Fun Shoot
- USDA Crop Forecast
- Ag Labor Relations Forum
- Leadership Highlands
- Drone Technology
- Annual Citrus Conference
- Member Directory
- Hall of Fame Nominations
- Gibberellic Acid Apps.



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2025 Calendar of Events

August 20-21

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

August 27-29

Annual Agricultural Labor Relations Forum @ Wyndham Grand Orlando Resort
Bonnet Creek - Orlando

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

The Florida Legislature, thanks to Senator Ben Albritton and other political friends of the citrus industry, made a very significant investment in the Florida Citrus industry to the tune of nearly \$140 million dollars in the recent legislative session. Nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of those resources are slated for the CRAFT program, with the very clear and deliberate intention of incentivizing growers to put new trees in the ground.



So, CRAFT program leadership will soon develop new tree planting assistance programs for growers to take advantage of. While the details (*I believe they will be pretty generous*) of the potential programs are not known at this time – they should be in place by the end of July I believe.

So if you have any potential interest at all in putting new trees in the ground, either replanting a solid set bloc or resetting an existing grove – perhaps even in the short term, you should reach out to the CRAFT team now, or at least check out their website, to learn more about how their program and application process will work when it opens in early August. If nothing else – get on their e-mail notification list.

I can testify that from a number of grove visits that I have recently made – that the folks that have taken advantage of, and invested in, CRAFT new tree programs so far have some very nice young blocs coming along. Growers owe to themselves to look into the program.

Florida Citrus Mutual staff did a masterful job in the planning and execution of the 2025 Annual Citrus Conference including hosting a very large crowd of over 450 growers and other industry folks. There was excellent educational programming and industry leadership meeting availability and involvement. All of this while creating a very hospitable and family friendly environment for industry members to enjoy during the conference.

Congratulations to Kevin Koppelman who was elected to serve a two year term as Florida Citrus Mutual Board Chairman during the Mutual Board meeting at the conference. Thanks also go out to Kyle Story for his commitment and service to our industry as Mutual Board Chair for the past several years. These two gentlemen, and many others who are actively involved, invest a significant portion of their personal time to addressing the many issues that confront our industry. We certainly appreciate your service!

During the conference's Thursday luncheon, Senator Ben Albritton was recognized for his years of work promoting and protecting our industry with the 2025 Citrus Achievement Award. Congratulations and well deserved Ben!

Production work on the 2025 HCCGA Annual Member Directory is moving into its final stages. We plan on getting it out to membership in late July. Thank you to all of the Associate members that invested in Directory advertising. They have made it possible for the Directory to be produced and distributed.

Save the dates for a few things coming up: the **2025 Citrus Expo**, and it's very informative educational sessions, is coming up on **August 20th & 21st** at the Florida State Fairgrounds in Tampa. And for some great outdoor fun and fellowship – not to mention some tremendous food & raffle prizes - the 2025 HCCGA Citrus Fun Shoot will be held on Saturday, **December 6th** as the shoot again returns to **Quail Creek Sporting Ranch**.

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: 863-381-8551) for additional information if you need it; or if I can be of any assistance in any matter, large or small. And remember that if you are not getting very regular e-mail updates from us - please let us know right away.

Thanks, Ray



Info Notes

Florida Citrus Growers' Institute

The 2025 Florida Citrus Growers' Institute was held on Tuesday, April 8, 2025 on the campus of South Florida State College. Presentations from the 2025 Institute are now available on the Citrus Agents website: <https://citrusagents.ifas.ufl.edu>.

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/>.

Growing Citrus - A multipronged HLB strategy

This 17 page booklet is a brief guide to the most important things growers should keep in mind when developing HLB management plans for groves at: <https://crec.ifas.ufl.edu/citrus-research/presentations/citrus-expo-2024/booklets/growing-citrus>.

Keeping Citrus Growers Informed

An informative research book containing updates on more than 70 ongoing UF/IFAS research project at: <https://crec.ifas.ufl.edu/citrus-research/presentations/citrus-expo-2024/booklets/citrus-growers-informed>.

All In For Citrus 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.



UF/IFAS Research Website

The Citrus Research and Education Center (CREC) website at <https://crec.ifas.ufl.edu/citrus-research/> 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 provide 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>.

FDOC Webinars

The Florida Department of Citrus hosts monthly webinars in order to provide key information on various topics important to the Florida Citrus industry. To receive notifications on webinars and other topics, please e-mail news@citrus.myflorida.com and ask to be added to FDOC's email distribution list.

Restricted Use Pesticide Exams

Restricted Use Pesticide Exams Restricted Use Pesticide exams are done using laptops at most UF/IFAS county Extension offices. In Highlands County, the Extension office is scheduling exams for two days each month through October 2025. You can schedule your exam online at <https://pesticideexam.ifas.ufl.edu/public/countyList.faces>.

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/>



Citrus Seminars To Cover a Lot of Ground at Expo

This year's Citrus & Specialty Crop Expo will give growers a great learning opportunity and a chance to network with peers during breaks on the trade show floor. With more than 20 speakers, the citrus seminars will be even more comprehensive than in previous years.

During the [June All In For Citrus podcast](#), Michael Rogers, director of the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) Citrus Research and Education Center, said the program will focus largely on HLB management but also will touch on other important production topics.

"Trunk injection has a lot of interest among growers right now, so we have several talks that are dealing with different aspects of trunk injection — the how-tos, the economics and advancing injections through automation," Rogers said. "There will be a good deal of information on this during the seminars."

Wednesday, Aug. 20

- CRAFT Update and Using the New Data Portal — Steven Hall, Citrus Research and Field Trial Foundation
- Florida Citrus Under Protective Screen: From Research Prototype to Commercial Production — Arnold Schumann, University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS)
- How HLB Harms Tree Health and What We Can Do About It — Christopher Vincent, UF/IFAS
- Understanding What Makes a Tree HLB-Tolerant — Amit Levy, UF/IFAS
- Genetic Transformation of Citrus: Understanding Timelines, Progress Made and Future Expectations — Manjul Dutt, UF/IFAS
- Using Citrus Tristeza Virus-Based Vector as a Platform for HLB Management — Chooa El-Mohtar, UF/IFAS
- How We Are Improving HLB Resistance With CRISPR Gene Editing and Other Horticultural Practices — Nian Wang, UF/IFAS
- Potential of RNAi-Based Strategies for Citrus Root Weevil Control — Nabil Killiny, UF/IFAS

Thursday, Aug. 21

- Optimizing Young Citrus Tree Protection Against HLB — Fernando Alferez, UF/IFAS
- Best Practices for Applying Oxytetracycline (OTC) by Trunk Injection — Ute Albrecht, UF/IFAS
- Effects of OTC Trunk Injections on Marathon, Bingo, 1412, Sugar Belle and OLL-8 Scions — John Chater, UF/IFAS
- Insights on OTC Adoption and Profitability From a Florida Citrus Survey — Tara Wade, UF/IFAS
- Advancements in Automated Trunk Injection of Citrus Trees — Yiannis Ampatzidis, UF/IFAS
- Improving Tree Health With PGRs for Better Yield and Quality — Tripti Vashisth, UF/IFAS
- Integrated HLB Management for Florida Citrus — Ozgur Batuman, UF/IFAS
- Distribution of Asian Citrus Psyllids in Groves, Natural Suppression and Management

See EXPO on page 6

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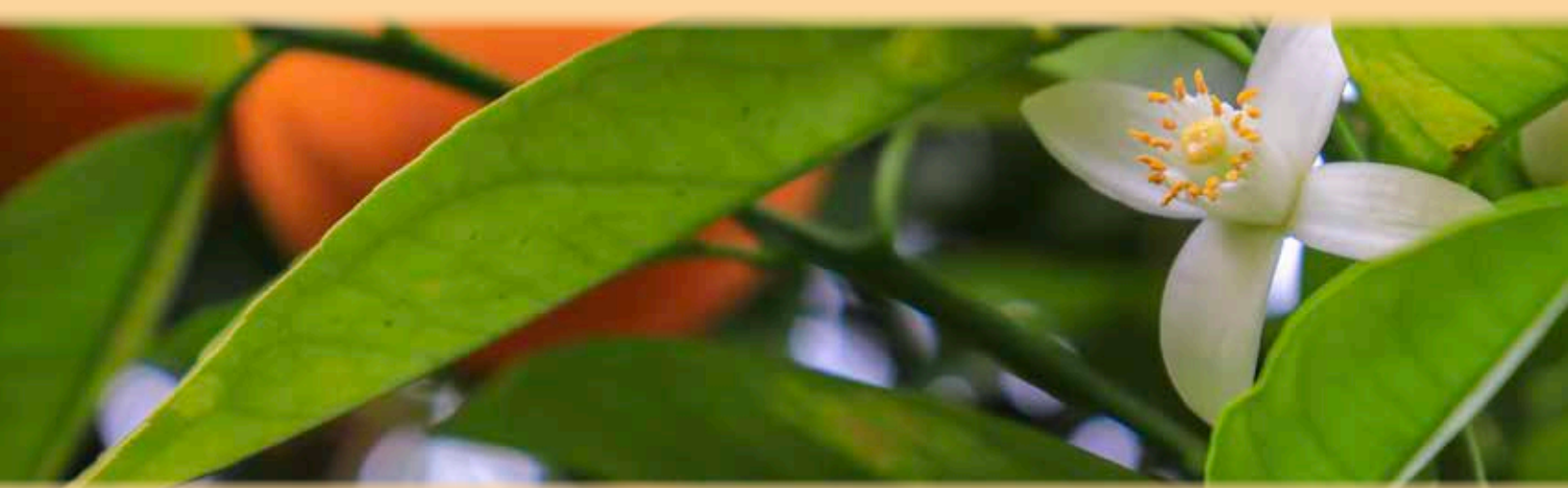
EXPO, Con't from page 5

Implications — Jawwad Qureshi, UF/IFAS

- Developing a Multi-Pest Management Strategy in Citrus — Lauren Diepenbrock, UF/IFAS
- Greasy Green and Its Relationship to Rind Blotch — Megan Dewdney, UF/IFAS
- Citrus Crop Insurance Considerations — Ariel Singerman, UF/IFAS
- Boosting Citrus Resilience With Silicon — Muhammad Adnan Shahid, UF/IFAS
- Methods to Measure Soil Health in Florida Citrus — Sarah Strauss, UF/IFAS
- Using the 5Rs of Nutrient Management to Optimize Citrus Production — Davie Kadyampakeni, UF/IFAS

In addition to the citrus seminars, the general session on Aug. 20 will address some of the bigger issues facing all of agriculture. A panel of leaders from key grower associations will tackle these topics. Participants are Matt Joyner of Florida Citrus Mutual, Chris Butts of the Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association and Mike Joyner of Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association. They will discuss topics like the battle against HLB, disaster relief, labor, the farm bill and much more.

To see the full program and register for the event, go to www.Citrusexpo.net.



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Industry Support

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

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

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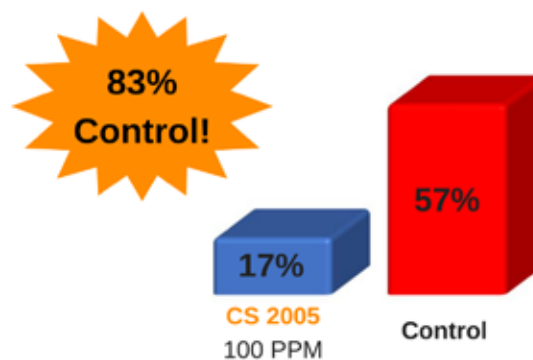
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Upcoming CRAFT Programs

The CRAFT Foundation is excited for the historic amount of funding the Florida Legislature has allocated toward citrus research in the 2025-2026 state budget that was finalized last week. CRAFT is expected to receive \$100 million of the allocated funding to continue our applied research through large-scale field trials with the goal of revitalizing Florida's citrus production.

The CRAFT Foundation Board of Directors and staff are thankful for the leadership and vision of Senate President Ben Albritton for the investment in the CRAFT programs, and for the tremendous support from Commissioner Wilton Simpson, Senate President Pro Tempore Jason Brodeur, and Speaker Danny Perez. We are also thankful for our friends at Florida Citrus Mutual for their advocacy on behalf of the citrus industry and CRAFT.

The CRAFT Foundation is in the process of designing the new programs to implement this investment in the future of Florida's citrus industry. Information about the upcoming program timelines and rules will be released soon. Any interested parties are strongly encouraged to email CRAFT Executive Director Steven Hall at Steven@craftfdn.org to be added to our email distribution list to receive the latest program information.



ETT Program

The CRAFT Foundation Board of Directors approved amendments to all Existing Tree Therapy (ETT) Round 1, 2, and 3 contracts that revise the contract payment schedule. The amendment allows Participants to be eligible for Payment 3 upon the submission of the data for the harvest year following the second year's approved treatment, which is a year earlier than the previous payment schedule. The

Board authorized this change to provide participating growers with the final contractual participation payment to assist with their treatment costs.

This change means many Participants will be eligible for their third and final payment this year. For example, a Participant that applied their first treatment in 2023 and that has received their second Payment, may be eligible for the third and final payment following submission of the 2024-2025 harvest year data to CRAFT. All data submission surveys are available on the CRAFT website Data Entry Page at <https://craftfdn.org/craft-existing-tree-therapies-data-entry>.

There are separate data surveys for each ETT Round. For example, a Round 1 contract will have a 1,000 series number (i.e. ETT-1076) and must submit their data using the Round 1 surveys. The submittal of the third year's treatment and harvest data remains a contractual requirement for all ETT participants. The survey to submit this information will be made available to all participants later this year.

Participants are reminded to sign and return these amendments immediately. A participant's failure to be in compliance with prior year programs may prevent participation in future programs.

Data Analysis

As announced at the Citrus Conference, CRAFT's analysis of the grower submitted ETT program data is underway. The early results are encouraging, especially considering the damage inflicted by two hurricanes on the industry last year. The data from the 2025-2026 harvest (the third year following initial treatment for most program trees) will be crucial for giving us a



See CRAFT on page 9



complete picture. When completed, the results will be presented on a publicly accessible dashboard. This data analysis will be expanding to include the CRAFT new tree planting programs as the trees from our early cycles mature to harvesting age and more data is submitted for those cycles.

Project Verification and Sampling Visits

Each year, program participants are visited by CRAFT representatives that conduct a site verification to confirm the progress of each project. These visits are currently underway and CRAFT is highly encouraged by the vibrant appearance of many

of the projects. The images below were taken during verification visits and were included in the CRAFT presentation at last week's citrus conference. We are also excited to see many of the new citrus tree varieties, including the Donaldson, from the 2024 (Cycle 5) being planted. We are enthusiastic about their potential and look forward to monitoring their progress.

Also, CRAFT has partnered with the FDACS Division of Fruit and Vegetables (F&V) to conduct sampling visits to CRAFT projects this summer. The purpose of these visits will be to collect leaf and soil samples for laboratory analysis. The results of these analysis will be incorporated into the ongoing data analysis and will be made available to participating growers. Participants are encouraged to assist F&V schedule their visits in a timely manner.

Growers with any questions or seeking additional information about the CRAFT program are encouraged to contact Executive Director Steven Hall at Steven@craftfdn.org or (863) 333-2931, Assistant Program Manager Tina Buice at Tina@craftfdn.org, or Scientific Coordinator Carisa Keller at Carisa@craftfdn.org.



FSA State Executive Director - Marcinda Kester

The Trump Administration recently appointed Marcinda Kester as the new State Executive Director (SED) for the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) in Florida and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Kester joined the Florida FSA team on June 2, 2025.

Kester has worked for FSA for 33 years, and most recently served as the FSA County Executive Director for Polk, Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties in Florida. Prior to her role in Florida, she served as the Farm Programs Disaster Specialist and Farm Programs Chief for FSA in Kentucky. As SED, Kester is responsible for overseeing the delivery of FSA programs to agricultural producers in Florida.

FSA helps America's farmers, ranchers and forest landowners invest in, improve, protect and expand their agricultural operations through the delivery of agricultural programs for all Americans. FSA implements agricultural policy, administers credit and loan programs, and manages conservation, commodity, disaster recovery and marketing programs through a national network of state and county offices and locally elected county committees. For more information, visit fsa.usda.gov.

Highlands County's agricultural community is serviced out of the Okeechobee USDA office, which has an excellent staff led by a very experienced Executive Director - Jenny Hoover. You can contact that office at (863) 763-3345 x2 or jenny.hoover@fl.usda.gov.

Recommendations for Oxytetracycline Injections

Three University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) researchers recently issued the document **Suggested Use Pattern of Injectable Antimicrobials for Huanglongbing (HLB) Management**. It can be downloaded at: www.citrusindustry.net/2025/06/27/recommendations-oxytetracycline-injections. The authors are Ute Albrecht, associate professor of horticulture; Ozgur Batuman, associate professor of plant pathology; and Megan Dewdney, associate professor of plant pathology.

The antimicrobials for Florida citrus are **Remedium TI** and **Rectify**; both contain oxytetracycline. Some document highlights follow.

APPLICATION TIMING

Only one application per year is allowed for bearing trees, but non-bearing trees can be injected twice annually with a four-month interval. The most desirable timings of injection for various citrus varieties are:

- Early-season varieties such as Hamlin, Navel and Fallglo: March, April and May. June is a less desirable injection time.
- Mid-season varieties such as Murcott, Pineapple and Midsweet: March, April, May and June. July is a less desirable injection time.
- Late-season varieties such as Valencia: March, April, May, June and July. August is a less desirable injection time.
- Grapefruit such as Ray Ruby, Flame and Ruby Red: March, April and May. June is a less desirable injection time.

APPLICATION GUIDELINES

- Do not apply during bloom.
- Do not apply during leaf flushing.
- Apply when leaves are fully expanded for efficient uptake and distribution.
- Trees should be well watered before and at the time of application.
- Do not apply during drought conditions.
- Leaf yellowing (phytotoxicity) may occur on the side of injection.
- Only inject once the product is fully dissolved.
- Only use freshly prepared solution.

INJECTION SITES

- Do not re-use injection sites.
- The rootstock is the recommended location for injection, but scion injections are also effective.
- Subsequent injections should be above or below the initial site by 2 inches and on the opposite side, or to the right or left by 2 to 3 inches.
- Do not use any post-wounding treatments as these may interfere with wound healing.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Injection into the trunk can cause significant damage to the tree.
- Trees with a trunk diameter of less than 2.5 inches are prone to more damage.
- Minimizing the hole size by using a smaller injector tip will minimize tree damage.

The document also contains information about pre-harvest and re-entry intervals, maximum amount of product per tree per year, dose per tree by trunk diameter, and personal protective equipment.

Source: UF/IFAS

Florida Legislative Funding for Citrus

Matt Joyner, Florida Citrus Mutual executive vice president and chief executive officer, issued the following statement in reaction to the Florida Legislature's approval of nearly \$140 million (\$139,673,565) for the citrus industry in the state's 2025–26 fiscal year budget:

"Florida's citrus growers applaud the Florida Legislature's record-breaking investment of nearly \$140 million to shepherd the state's iconic citrus industry back to greatness. It's a vote of confidence in our growers and exactly the support we need to rebuild and sustain Florida's signature crop. We are especially grateful to Senate President Ben Albritton for championing this monumental investment and to Florida Agriculture Commissioner Wilton Simpson, President Pro Tempore Jason Brodeur and Speaker Danny Perez for their strong support. The investment will help boost production, strengthen the state's economy and preserve the sweet legacy of Florida citrus for generations to come."

Budgeted citrus funding includes the following initiatives:

- **\$104.5 million** for the Citrus Research and Field Trial Foundation (CRAFT) to conduct large-scale field trials focused on grove management, treatments and therapies, disease-resistant varieties, grove design, pest and disease control and post-planting care to increase citrus production and for research through the Citrus Research and Development Found (CRDF).
- **\$10 million** for the Citrus Packing Equipment Cost Share Program through the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) for packinghouses to purchase or rehab equipment
- **\$10 million** for Florida Department of Citrus (FDOC) marketing efforts to promote the state's citrus products to consumers and influencers
- **\$6,523,565** for the Citrus Health Response Program, administered by FDACS, to help researchers develop new varieties, increase citrus production and advance technologies to treat and prevent citrus greening
- **\$4 million** for Citrus Crop Decline Supplemental Funding for the Citrus Inspection Trust Fund to supplement grower assessments for citrus inspection
- **\$2 million** for the Citrus Recovery Program through FDOC to advance technologies and produce trees that show tolerance or resistance to citrus greening
- **\$2 million** for the FDACS Citrus Budwood Nursery to expand propagation of budwood trees and seedlings that are tolerant or resistant to citrus greening
- **\$650,000** for the development of new citrus varieties

Additionally, the budget includes a \$250 million annual appropriation for the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program, which aims to protect working agricultural operations from development by establishing conservation easements.

Source: Florida Citrus Mutual

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2025 Citrus Fun Shoot Quail Creek - December 6th

Preliminary planning for the **2025 HCCGA Citrus Sporting Clays Fun Shoot** is about to get underway. So save the date, **Saturday December 6th**, on your calendar for our 28th Annual Citrus Fun Shoot and Prime Rib & Seafood luncheon extravaganza. The Citrus Fun Shoot will once again take place at **Quail Creek Sporting Ranch**, a full service world class shooting destination located just north of Okeechobee. If you want more information about Quail Creek Sporting Ranch, check out their website at: <https://quailcreeksportingranch.com>.

While our Fun Shoot has continued to evolve over the past 28 plus years, some things remain the same for us – providing a great opportunity for fellowship with others within our industry and greater agricultural community, fun shooting, great food and some fabulous green bird station and raffle prizes.

We anticipate getting our shoot flier to our members and the public later this summer for shoot registration to commence. However, if you want to get your company involved in this year's event or have any questions now – just reach out to Ray at the HCCGA office.

We are now starting the process of getting our event's Title Sponsors into place, and recognized on our shoot flier. Our friends at **Natalie's** have already committed to providing their great juice for the event, so we are off to a good start. And while we expect that most of the rest of last year's major sponsors will re-up (*4 already have before we even asked*) for this year– often after the shoot flier comes out we hear: *"boy I wish I could have been a major sponsor of the shoot"*.

If you are interested in being one of our Title Sponsors (a \$1,500.00 investment includes placement for 8 shooters, use of one shooting cart and a lot of great PR), contact either Ray or Jan at the HCCGA office ASAP for more details.

Look forward to seeing many of you at **Quail Creek Sporting Ranch** on **Saturday, December 6th**!



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For more information, visit CRAFTfdn.org or contact Steven Hall - 863.682-1115 or Steven@CRAFTfdn.org.



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USDA Citrus Crop Forecast Update

June, 2025

All Oranges 12.0 Million Boxes

The 2024-2025 Florida all orange forecast released on June 12, 2025 by the USDA Agricultural Statistics Board is 12.0 million boxes. The total includes 4.60 million boxes of non-Valencia oranges (early, mid-season, and Navel varieties) and 7.40 million boxes of Valencia oranges.

Non-Valencia Oranges 4.60 Million Boxes

The forecast of non-Valencia orange production is 4.60 million boxes. The Navel forecast, included in the non-Valencia portion of the forecast is 100,000 boxes, 2 percent of the non-Valencia total.

Valencia Oranges 7.40 Million Boxes

The forecast of Valencia orange production is 7.40 million boxes, up 350,000 boxes from the previous forecast.

All Grapefruit 1.30 Million Boxes

The forecast of all grapefruit production unchanged at 1.30 million boxes. The white grapefruit forecast remains at 140,000 boxes. The red grapefruit forecast is unchanged at 1.16 million boxes.

Tangerines & Mandarins 400,000 Boxes

The forecast for tangerines and mandarins is 400,000 boxes, unchanged from the previous forecast. This production level is 11 percent less than last season's final production of 450,000 boxes. This forecast number includes all certified tangerine and mandarin varieties.



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Annual Agricultural Labor Relations Forum


The 51st Annual Agricultural Labor Relations Forum will be held on August 27th-29th at the Wyndham Grand Orlando Resort Bonnet Creek.

This annual seminar, put on by the Florida Specialty Crop Foundation, educates agricultural employers, including growers, shippers, farm labor contractors, and other employers, on compliance with agricultural labor laws and sound labor relations practices.

You can go to FFVA's website at www.ffva.com for additional information about the Forum's educational schedule and/or to register.



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SAVE THE DATE!
Saturday, December 6, 2025
Citrus Sporting Clays
Fun Shoot
Seafood &
Prime Rib Luncheon

Quail Creek Sporting Ranch

Leadership Highlands 2026

South Florida State College is now accepting applications for the Leadership Highlands Class of 2026. The Leadership Highlands program has been developing local leaders since the pilot class graduated in 2000. The mission of the Leadership Highlands program is *"to develop Leaders with a thorough understanding of, and strong sense of commitment to, Highlands County and an appreciation for the strength found in our County's abundant diversity"*.

Founded and nurtured by the three Highlands County Chambers of Commerce and select alumni, who comprise the Leadership Highlands Advisory Board, the goals of the program are to familiarize the participants with the infrastructure, agencies and economic enterprises that exist in Highlands County; to expose the participants to the range of needs in the community and to identify the resources available to meet those needs; to provide participants the opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with each other and existing community leaders, so as to learn from the backgrounds and perspectives of one another; and to encourage civic participation and volunteer involvement in the community.

The Program kicks off with an August 28, 2025 orientation session and features 10 full day sessions held once a month (*one session is actually a multi-day trip to Tallahassee in February*) that explore different aspects of Highlands County's complex matrix of industries governance and various community organizations. Graduation from the program will be after session ten on June 4, 2026.

Class size is limited to no more than 28 members, and is by invitation of the selection committee. For information about enrollment or participation, please contact Tina Gottus, Coordinator, Leadership Highlands at SFSC at 863-784-7466 or tina.gottus@southflorida.edu for additional information.

Applications are due by **July 14, 2025**. The program's application can be downloaded at: <https://www.southflorida.edu/current-students/degrees-programs/special-programs/leadership-highlands>

Members of the agricultural community (*especially early and mid-career young adults*) are encouraged to consider participation in this program.

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Drone Technology in Citrus

By Ben Krause

It was 2018, in the wake of Hurricane Irma, and I was sitting at my desk trying to figure out how to make the numbers work on our family groves. Production was down, fruit prices were great one minute and then the bottom fell out the next... Then COVID hit and the cost of inputs hit highs we never thought were possible. One thing was clear, business as usual was not going to work much longer. Our standard program was five sprays a year with the airblasts rolling at about 2 mph – and I knew we could not afford to do that.

We began flying spray drones in 2022, as a wild experiment to see if it could help us cover acres faster. We only flew our own acres to start out and it was certainly a steep learning curve, but we do feel like the drones have found their place in our fleet. We now have four drones -- to spray for ourselves but also dozens of other custom application customers.

Some of the challenges: Dispensing chemistries from the air is heavily regulated (as it should be), which is why it took us nearly a year to get fully licensed with the FAA to be able to operate commercially. The technology is very cool, but like any piece of equipment it requires diligent maintenance and attentive operators. You've got pumps, motors, and propellers - fast spinning parts that wear down over time and need replacing. And then there is the education hurdle you always face with any new technology.

Many customers initially think, "it's a drone, just fly around and spray what you see". But because each battery only gives you about 7 minutes of flight time, you learn quickly that you can't operate a drone efficiently that way. This has forced us to become masters in mission planning, which involves a smaller surveying drone, a souped-up computer, and a 3D mapping software to build pre-planned flight missions ahead of time -- so on spray day the drone knows exactly where every tank is going before we arrive on site.

In citrus, we like to use the drones primarily on young blocks (0-4 years). Our drone program on young citrus for 2025 is nine sprays, for about the same money as five airblast sprays would cost us. The program is very comparable to a hoop boom program, in that we mix up batches per 100 gallons, but then apply to achieve complete coverage, which with the drone is at about 10 GPA on young trees. There is a savings on chemical cost by applying this way, and we can cover 80-100 acres a day per drone.

Young trees flush sporadically, and so getting nine opportunities a year to protect that flush gives us a higher chance of success than trying to do the same thing with only four or five applications from the airblast. With the drones, we've sprayed an array of other crops as well: watermelons, strawberries, blueberries, eggplant, pasture, hay fields, shade paint on greenhouse rooftops, canals and ponds, and we spread ant bait with them as well.

All in all, the drones have been valuable tools for our operation. By no means are they replacing tractors in our fleet. They are just another tool in the toolbox to help us persist in what has been a very challenging decade for Florida citrus. Like many of you reading this article, our drive to innovate comes from a deep sense of gratitude for this industry, and an unwavering desire to see it thrive.

Courtesy of Krause Services ~ www.krauseusa.com ~ (863) 735-1286 ~ ben@krauseusa.com

2025 Annual Citrus Conference

Florida Citrus Mutual hosted another very well planned and executed annual citrus conference in Bonita Springs in early June. Over 450 growers, affiliated citrus industry members, industry organizations leaders, political representatives, research personnel, etc. were in attendance.

There were meetings of the Citrus Mutual Board, the Florida Citrus Commission and the CRDF Board for industry folks to participate in. The educational session on Thursday morning proved to be very informative. Those presentations can be viewed at: www.flcitrusmutual.com/annual-conference.

The Citrus Mutual PAC silent auction raised a bunch of resources for proactive political engagement on Thursday night from a multitude of great silent auction items. There were also multiple venues for social interaction and discourse on a wide range of industry topics.

One highlight of the conference's Thursday night banquet was listening to Highlands County High School student Annandra Ramkissoo give her Julia C. Black Memorial Speech Contest award-winning oration about how citrus positively impacts our great State. Her extremely informative speech was recognized by a standing ovation upon completion.

The Coconut Point Hyatt resort is extremely family friendly with a very affordable room rate for conference participants – so if you have not been part of the conference in the past, you should consider doing so in 2026 when the citrus conference returns to Bonita Springs on June 10th-12th.

One of the other highlights of the conference that helps put the many tribulations associated with our industry out of mind for just a few hours is the annual “unofficial” water slide racing competition. This year there was another very large field of participants in the double elimination event. A storm rolling in with some lightning precluded the event from being totally completed - however a Friday night “dance off” between the remaining undefeated competitors proved to be even more entertaining than the slide races themselves. Those involved also appreciated both the winner's prizes and the buckets of liquid refreshments provided pool deck by our friends at **Tropicana Brands Group**.

So congrats to the staff at Florida Citrus Mutual for putting together another great conference!



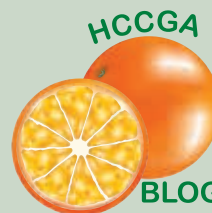
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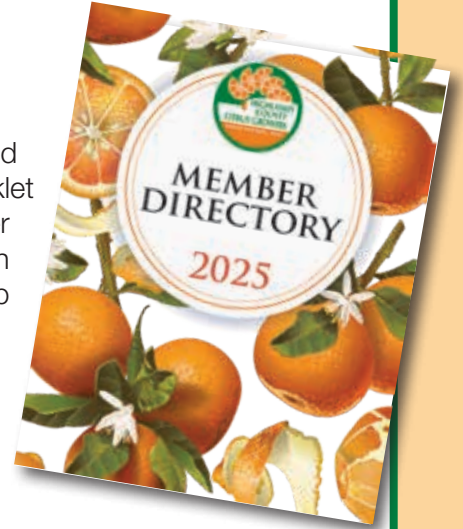


[@hccitrusgrowers](https://twitter.com/hccitrusgrowers)

2025 HCCGA Member Directory

The 2025 HCCGA Member Directory is now in production, and is scheduled for delivery to all HCCGA members in late July. This 8.5 X 11 full color booklet has become a valuable year round resource guide for our members, grower and associate alike. This year's directory will include Association information such as: Grower contact information, Associate Member Bios, Sponsorship Recognitions, Board Members, Officers, etc.

Thank you to the sixty Associate members who through advertising investment have made the production and distribution of this directory possible. Please try to patronize the directory's advertisers whenever they can provide a good or service to your business – because we appreciate their investment in our Association.



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Citrus Hall of Fame Nominations

The Florida Citrus Hall of Fame honors distinguished leaders whom have made significant contributions to the Florida citrus industry. The nomination period for the Citrus Hall of Fame is now open through September 15th.

In the fall of each year, the Board of Directors gathers nominations and chooses the inductees for the year. An annual luncheon in March is the official induction ceremony for the new members of the Hall of Fame.

All nomination forms and corresponding information is due to the Selection Committee by midnight on September 15th to be considered for that year. Any information received after this date will be considered the next year. An individual may be nominated for three (3) consecutive years but then cannot be considered for one (1) year before starting the process again.

All nominations **must be submitted utilizing the official nomination form (PDF)** as a cover sheet, but there is no specific format for the corresponding information. The nomination form can be found at: www.floridacitrushalloffame.com/nominate. Electronic nominations, Word or pdf files, are encouraged.

Those making nominations are encouraged to provide detailed relevant background information describing the nominee's contributions to the citrus industry. Other activities may be of interest, but all candidates will be considered mainly for their impact on the citrus industry.

Additional pages with organization affiliations/offices held, publications (if applicable) and letters of recommendation should provide additional strength to the nomination package. These additional pages must be chosen and prepared wisely with careful thought given to enhancing the candidate's qualifications for the award. Please provide information that is creative but not too lengthy. Sometimes too much information can be distracting or trivial.

The nomination form and related documents should be emailed or mailed to these addresses:

Electronic files should be emailed to: KristiJ@FICitrusMutual.com Hard copies should be mailed to:

Florida Citrus Hall of Fame

C/O Florida Citrus Mutual
PO Box 1576
Bartow, FL 33831-1576

For additional information or nomination guidance, contact: **Kristi Sheffield Joyner**
Executive Director of The Florida Citrus Hall of Fame
(863) 221-4300 ~ KristiJ@FICitrusMutual.com



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Consider Summer Gibberellic Acid Applications

By Tripti Vashisth, Marcielo Postillos and Taylor Livingston

In recent years, many citrus growers in Florida have begun using gibberellic acid (GA) to enhance tree growth and productivity. Initially, the recommendation was to apply GA monthly from September to January for Valencia oranges to maintain canopy health, reduce fruit drop and improve yields. However, some growers are hesitant about applying GA in the fall due to concerns about the greener peel color, which can affect the appeal of fresh fruit even though GA does not impact internal quality. Additionally, applying GA five times increases production costs.

Recent field trials have investigated the effectiveness of applying GA in early summer and the minimum number of applications needed to optimize tree productivity. Data collected over two years for both Hamlin and Valencia oranges showed that trees receiving three or more GA sprays exhibited better fruit retention and lower preharvest fruit drop compared to untreated trees. While untreated trees experienced a decline in canopy density, those treated with GA maintained a more stable canopy, with better results for trees receiving more applications. Notably, even after Hurricane Milton, the treated trees preserved their canopies.

Overall, the yield improved by 30% with a higher number of GA applications. In terms of fruit quality, internal traits such as Brix, acidity percentage and pounds of solids per box were not significantly affected by the number of GA sprays in either Hamlin or Valencia oranges. However, peel integrity improved, indicated by lower electrolyte leakage, even though the color development of treated fruit was slightly delayed. It is important to note that applying GA three to five times resulted in a greener peel color.

The research results suggest that early and repeated GA applications can be a valuable strategy for growers managing groves affected by HLB (citrus greening disease). A minimum of three applications, spaced 45 days apart starting in July, can promote canopy health and reduce fruit loss without compromising the internal fruit quality.

Tripti Vashisth is associate center director and an associate professor, Marcielo Postillos is a visiting scholar, and Taylor Livingston is a biological scientist, all located at the UF/IFAS CREC in Lake Alfred.

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Informational Websites



FDOC Grower Website

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

2022-2023 Florida Citrus Production Guides

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

HLB Nutrient Management Web Site

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

CREC Citrus Industry Update

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

Black Spot Info

Information about citrus black spot is available on the Lake Alfred CREC website at: www.crec.ifas.ufl.edu/extension/black_spot/citrus_black_spot.htm

Citrus Research & Education Center Lake Alfred

www.crec.ifas.ufl.edu.

2023 Florida Citrus Growers' Institute Presentations Online

The 2023 Florida Citrus Growers' Institute was held on April 4th at the South Florida State College Avon Park campus. The educational presentations were recorded and are available online at the citrus agent's website: Here you will also find PDF versions of the slides. <https://citrusagents.ifas.ufl.edu/archived-presentations/2023>

South Florida Water Management District

www.sfwmd.gov.

Safe Fruits & Veggies Website

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

CRDF Website

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

Research Updates Website

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

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

<http://www.freshfromflorida.com>

University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

www.ifas.ufl.edu.

Indian River Research and Education Center, Ft. Pierce

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

United States Horticultural Research Laboratory, Ft. Pierce

http://www.ars.usda.gov/main/site_main.htm?modecode=66-18-00-00

Florida Citrus Extension Agents Web Site

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

Highlands County Extension Web Site

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

IFAS EDIS/IFAS Solutions for Life sites

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

Soil and Leaf Tissue Testing

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

Citrus Nutrition

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

FDOC Greening Research Updates

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

FASS Reports

Florida Agricultural Statistics Service (FASS) Reports. https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Florida/.

USDA Citrus Crop Update Website

The USDA adjusts the citrus crop estimate on a monthly basis. Get the latest citrus crop estimate updates at: https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Florida/Publications/Citrus/index

Southeast AgNet

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

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

Low Volume Spray Application Techniques

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

SWFWMD Permit Info

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

OSHA's Agricultural Website

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

Florida Citrus Mutual

<http://flcitrusmutual.com>.

Florida Farm Bureau

www.floridafarmbureau.org.

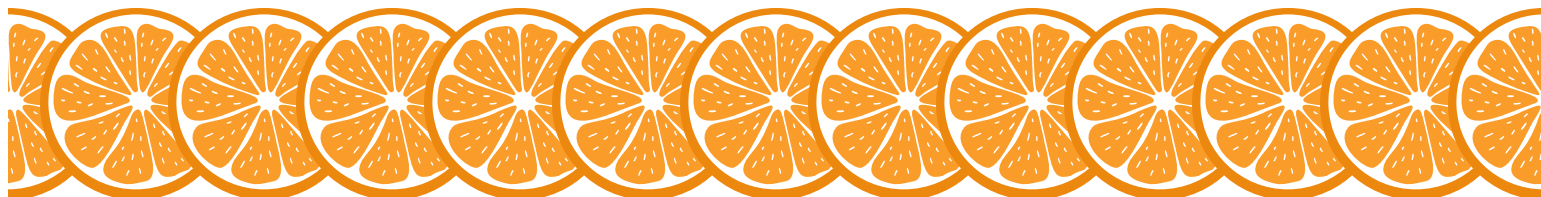
FAWN

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

Weather Underground

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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
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