



Citrus connection



HIGHLANDS COUNTY CITRUS GROWERS **President's Column** by Riley McKenna

The recent summer rains have brought more than just new leaf flushes; they've also delivered some answered prayers and unexpected boosts from the legislative front.

For the second month in a row, the news of substantial advocacy, at both the state and federal levels, has encouraged me to stay engaged and optimistic about the direction of our industry.

A notable announcement comes from Florida's Department of Agriculture and its initiation of STAGE 1 of the Supplemental Disaster Relief Program (SDRP). This \$675 million grant will provide crucial financial support to Floridian timber farmers and citrus growers across the state! This financial relief could not have come at a more critical time knowing momentum is finally building the groves. The reality of soon carrying fewer financial burdens will undoubtedly give us the breathing room needed to move forward with confidence.

If you are not up-to-date on the SDRP, authorized by the American Relief Act 2025 & launched July 10th by Secretary Brooke Rollins, I urge you to do your research. I want to inform fellow growers that pre-filled applications have been mailed to those who meet the eligibility criteria, so be sure to check your mail! If you did not receive an application or have questions about the program, be sure to reach out your local FSA office.

As previously mentioned in my columns, we must continue to work together as an industry by sharing knowledge of both successful innovations and hard lessons learned. As with daily caretaking operations — whether it is fine-tuning nutrition, administering properly timed OTC injections, or managing IPCs — every regimen must be scrutinized to help discern what is best for each block, grove, and individual operation. What works for one grower may not work for another, but I guarantee that by sharing this knowledge and working together, we can drive industry progress.

Even just one year removed from a major hurricane, I'm seeing groves look better than they have in a long time with stronger canopies and increased fruit size — hopefully, these successes lead to picking more boxes with even better quality come this winter!

Dreams are not always reality, however, and I'm very aware of the long road we have ahead but I feel like we have more momentum than the last 20 years. No one knows what the future holds, but right now it feels like we are sitting at the top of the division at the All-Star break. With a little help from Mother Nature and the good Lord above, I am confident we will see encouraging pick-outs and test results that point to a brighter future.

I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to those within the Department of Agriculture, the Trump Administration, and especially to Secretary Rollins for your pivotal support and backing our industry. I would also like to recognize the board of directors, Florida Citrus Mutual, and those individuals working within The Craft Foundation for your hard-work and commitment to revitalize our industry. Lastly, the grower Members and sponsors for your support of Highland's County Citrus Growers Association and your interest in the status of our industry.

It takes all of your sharp minds, green thumbs, and devoted hearts to keep this industry thriving and I know without the dedication and efforts of each and every one of you, the future would not be nearly as bright.

Riley McKenna

JULY 2025

- Citrus EXPO
- EXPO Schedule
- FDACS Cost Share
- Disaster Block Grants
- Trunk Injections - Market Citrus
- Pesticide License Changes
- FDOC Budget
- USDA Crop Forecast
- Land Tax Classification
- Member Directory
- Citrus Fun Shoot
- Association Emails
- CRAFT Programs
- Genome Edited Trees



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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

October 9

Initial USDA Citrus Crop Forecast

November 4-6

Ag-Venture @ Highlands County Fairgrounds

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

A reminder that the 2025 Citrus & Specialty Crop Expo, and its very informative educational sessions, will take place on **August 20th & 21st** at the Florida State Fairgrounds in Tampa. The folks at AgNet Media have put together another very instructive Expo this year.

I want to congratulate seven HCCGA members that recently graduated from the Wedgworth Leadership Institute (WLI) as part of that program's 29 member Class XII. WLI is a two-year leadership development program, comprised of 11 seminars totaling 55 days, which further develops an individual's leadership capacities in order to bolster their representation of our agricultural and natural resources industries.



So thank you to **Lucy Abell, Miles Armstrong, Daniel Bott, Jason Johnson, Dan Kimble, Clay Pederson** and especially our current Board of Directors Chairman **Riley McKenna** for making an investment in themselves and the WLI program, and especially for their willingness to serve Florida's agricultural community.

Our annual Citrus Sporting Clays Fun Shoot will be at Quail Creek Sporting Ranch again this year, and will be held on **Saturday, December 6th**. Registration will open in September, so sign up early!

The CRAFT Program is rolling out a very robust, and simplified, new tree planting cost share program – so if you have any potential interest at all in putting new trees in the ground make sure to contact them.

All current Association members should receive their 2025 HCCGA Member Directory in the mail by the end of August. The directory serves as a great year round resource tool. I encourage you to take a quick look at who our Associate members and advertisers are; they are supporting our industry and Association, and I hope you will give them due consideration when you are in the market for goods and services.

Every year in my July newsletter report I take the opportunity to preach a little bit about Prostate Cancer (*hope you all don't mind*). It has now been twenty-three years since I was surprised to be diagnosed with a relatively advanced stage of this disease, and very soon thereafter underwent surgery and follow-up hormone treatments. I also underwent radiation treatment a little less than sixteen years ago to treat a reoccurrence. These bouts with cancer treatments, post treatment ramifications and the potential for future reoccurrences impact many aspects, both mentally and physically, of my life on a day to day basis.

I am also aware of others in our industry that have had to deal with this disease at relatively younger ages, so I want to strongly encourage all of our male members and friends over the age of 35-40 to get their **PSA** checked each and every time they have any blood work done. It takes absolutely no additional effort. Prostate cancer is the leading cancer that most men will have to face in their lifetime, and there is some research that shows *a significantly higher disease incidence among men who work with agricultural chemicals*.

Do not let your physician tell you that this is a disease of just older men or to not worry about testing for it until later in life (*one of my doctors did just that*). I was 44 years old at the time and my disease was already relatively advanced. I hope you don't mind me getting up on my prostate cancer soap box once a year, but early detection and action can help save your life!

While we strive to keep our members as informed as possible on a wide range of local issues, 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



Citrus BMP Manual

Earlier this year a new Citrus BMP Manual replaced the 2012 Citrus Manual reflecting advancements in agricultural science, water quality research and on-the-ground practices. The practices were developed by the FDACS Office of Agricultural Water Policy in coordination with the FDEP, UF/IFAS and industry experts.

The good news is that producers do not need to take any action in regards to the change in BMP manuals at this time. You will only be asked to “re-enroll” in the BMP program at the time of a site audit visit, or if you participate in a cost share program.

The Citrus BMP Manual can be accessed at:
<https://ccmedia.fdacs.gov/content/download/25410/file/Florida-Citrus-Operations-2024-Edition-Water-Quality-and-Water-Quantity-Best-Management-Practices.pdf>

Florida Citrus Growers' Institute

The 2025 Florida Citrus Growers' Institute was held on April 8th on the SFSC campus. 2025 Growers Institute presentations are now available on the Citrus Agents website at: <https://citrusagents.ifas.ufl.edu>.

2024-2025 Florida Citrus Production Guides

The 2024-2025 Florida Citrus Production Guides are available for pick up at the Highlands County Extension office (*the HCCGA office has a few as well*) or the handbooks are available online (with printable sections) at: <https://crec.ifas.ufl.edu/resources/production-guide>.

TEAM Card & Sales Tax Exemption Forms for Ag Uses

Florida Farm Bureau has a very informative website page listing a number of agriculturally related items that may be exempt from Florida 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>.

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.

Growing Citrus - A multipronged HLB strategy

This 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 AgNet Media 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 on disease related issues. The podcast complements the 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.

FDOC Webinars

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



The Largest Citrus Learning Opportunity of the Year

The Citrus & Specialty Crop Expo will present one of the largest seminar programs in recent history. The event is scheduled for Aug. 20–21 at the Florida State Fairgrounds in Tampa.

The event's general session will provide insights on the farm economy, trade, labor, disaster relief, the farm bill and more. Danny Munch will give an excellent and engaging presentation on the farm economy. The Citrus & Specialty Crop power panel, comprised of specialty crop association leadership, will tackle a wide range of issues.

Attendees will not want to miss retired New York City Fire Department Battalion Commander Jack Oehm's inspirational presentation on his experiences on the ground on 9/11 and his current role as an ambassador for the Tunnel to Towers program. Longtime friend and recent Citrus Hall of Fame inductee Dan Richey will introduce Oehm.



More than 20 presentations dedicated to citrus will be presented during the citrus seminars on Wednesday and Thursday. Multiple CEUs will be available citrus seminar attendees.

"This is the most extensive education program we've presented at the Expo in years," said Robin Loftin, AgNet Media president. "It

will be time well spent learning and networking with friends and peers. We encourage growers to come and support one another and the industry that serves them during this year's Citrus & Specialty Crop Expo."

Here's the full agenda for the general session and citrus seminars. To view the small fruit, vegetable and alternative crops agenda, go to: www.citrusexpo.net/2025-seminar-agenda.

Register for the Citrus & Specialty Crop Expo at: www.citrusexpo.net/register.

See SCHEDULE pg. 6 & 7



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SCHEDULE

WEDNESDAY, AUG. 20

General Session

- 9:00 a.m. Welcome and Announcements
- 9:15 a.m. **Citrus Research and Development Foundation (CRDF) Update**
Rick Dantzler, CRDF
- 9:30 a.m. **Old Problem, New Tools – Doubling Down on Cutting-Edge Science**
Scott Angle, University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS)
- 9:50 a.m. **Trends, Trade and Turbulence: The Specialty Crop Economy**
Danny Munch, American Farm Bureau
- 10:20 a.m. **Citrus & Specialty Crop Power Panel**
Mike Joyner, Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association; Matt Joyner, Florida Citrus Mutual; Chris Butts, Georgia Fruit & Vegetable Association
- 11:30 a.m. **From 9/11 to a Mission to Serve Military and First Responders**
Jack Oehm, Battalion Commander FDNY (retired)
- Noon **Lunch and Visit Trade Show**
John Deere gun safe drawing (courtesy of Everglades Equipment Group) for pre-registered growers during lunch.

Citrus Seminars

- 1:45 p.m. Welcome and Announcements
- 2:00 p.m. **CRAFT Update and Using New Data Portal**
Steven Hall, CRAFT
- 2:15 p.m. **Florida Citrus Under Protective Screen: From Research Prototype to Commercial Production**
Arnold Schumann, UF/IFAS
- 2:30 p.m. **How HLB Harms Tree Health and What We Can Do About It**
Christopher Vincent, UF/IFAS
- 2:45 p.m. **Understanding What Makes a Tree HLB-Tolerant**
Amit Levy, UF/IFAS
- 3:00 p.m. **Genetic Transformation of Citrus: Understanding Timelines, Progress Made and Future Expectations**
Manjul Dutt, UF/IFAS
- 3:15 p.m. **Using Citrus Tristeza Virus-Based Vector as a Platform for HLB Management**
Chooa El-Mohtar, UF/IFAS
- 3:30 p.m. **How We Are Improving HLB Resistance with CRISPR Gene Editing and Other Horticultural Practices**
Nian Wang, UF/IFAS
- 3:45 p.m. **Potential of RNAi-Based Strategies for Citrus Root Weevil Control**
Nabil Killiny, UF/IFAS
- 4:00 p.m. Visit Trade Show and Enjoy Beer in the Tree Defender Booth (#701)



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THURSDAY, AUG. 21

Citrus Seminars

- 8:30 a.m. Welcome and Announcements**
- 8:45 a.m. Optimizing Young Citrus Tree Protection Against HLB**
Fernando Alferez, UF/IFAS
- 9:00 a.m. Best Practices for Applying Oxytetracycline (OTC) by Trunk Injection**
Ute Albrecht, UF/IFAS
- 9:15 a.m. Effects of OTC Trunk Injections on Marathon, Bingo, 1412, Sugar Belle and OLL-8 Scions**
Jon Chater, UF/IFAS
- 9:30 a.m. Insights on OTC Adoption and Profitability from a Florida Citrus Survey**
Tara Wade, UF/IFAS
- 9:45 a.m. Advancements in Automated Trunk Injection of Citrus Trees**
Yiannis Ampatzidis, UF/IFAS
- 10:00 a.m. Improving Tree Health with PGRs for Better Yield and Quality**
Tripti Vashisth, UF/IFAS
- 10:15 a.m. Integrated HLB Management for Florida Citrus**
Ozgur Batuman, UF/IFAS
- 10:30 a.m. Brunch and Visit Trade Show**
- Noon Welcome and Announcements**
- 12:15 p.m. Distribution of Asian Citrus Psyllids in Groves, Natural Suppression and Management Implications**
Jawwad Qureshi, UF/IFAS
- 12:30 p.m. Developing a Multi-Pest Management Strategy in Citrus**
Lauren Diepenbrock, UF/IFAS
- 12:45 p.m. Greasy Green and Its Relationship to Rind Blotch**
Megan Dewdney, UF/IFAS
- 1:00 p.m. Citrus Crop Insurance Considerations**
Ariel Singerman, UF/IFAS
- 1:15 p.m. Boosting Citrus Resilience with Silicon**
Muhammad Adnan Shahid, UF/IFAS
- 1:30 p.m. Methods to Measure Soil Health in Florida Citrus**
Sarah Strauss, UF/IFAS
- 1:45 p.m. Using the 5Rs of Nutrient Management to Optimize Citrus Production**
Davie Kadyampakeni, UF/IFAS



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FDACS BMP Cost Share for 2025–26 FY

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) is now accepting applications for the 2025–2026 fiscal year through its Best Management Practices (BMP) Cost-Share Program. Agricultural producers are encouraged to apply via the online portal or reach out to their local FDACS field staff for assistance.

Eligible producers may receive up to 90% reimbursement on approved projects that contribute to improvements in water quality, water conservation, and nutrient management. **Please note: all projects must receive official FDACS approval before any work begins in order to qualify for reimbursement.** Reimbursement levels are based on the producer's commitment to data collection:

- **75% reimbursement** – No data collection required
- **80% reimbursement** – Two years of data collection
- **90% reimbursement** – Four years of data collection

Data is collected every two years and coincides with FDACS Implementation Verification (IV) site visits.

New this year: All projects must be completed and final paperwork submitted by **June 1, 2026**.

To learn more about program eligibility, data collection requirements, or to submit an application, visit the official BMP Cost-Share Program page: <https://www.fdacs.gov/Agriculture-Industry/Water/Agricultural-Best-Management-Practices/BMP-Cost-Share-Program>

For additional assistance, contact Kasey Deuberry, Southwest Florida Environmental Manager, at (850) 464-8066 or via email at kasey.deuberry@fdacs.gov.



SAVE THE DATE!

Saturday, December 6, 2025

Citrus Sporting Clays Fun Shoot

Seafood & Prime Rib Luncheon

Quail Creek Sporting Ranch

Supplemental Disaster Relief Program

Agricultural producers who suffered eligible crop losses due to natural disasters in 2023 and 2024 can now apply for \$16 billion in assistance through the **Supplemental Disaster Relief Program** (SDRP). USDA disaster assistance information can be found on www.farmers.gov.

To expedite the implementation of SDRP, The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) is delivering assistance in two stages. This first stage is open to producers with eligible crop losses that received assistance under crop insurance or the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program during 2023 and 2024. Stage One sign up will start in person at FSA county offices on July 10th. Prefilled applications were being mailed to producers July 9th. SDRP Stage Two signups for eligible shallow or uncovered losses will begin in early fall.

Stage One

FSA is launching a streamlined, pre-filled application process for eligible crop, tree and vine losses by leveraging existing Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) and Risk Management Agency (RMA) indemnified loss data. Eligible losses must be the result of natural disasters occurring in calendar years 2023 and/or 2024. To apply for SDRP, producers must submit the FSA-526, **Supplemental Disaster Relief Program (SDRP) Stage One Application**, in addition to having other forms on file with FSA.

Stage One payments are based on the SDRP adjusted NAP or Federal crop insurance coverage level the producer purchased for the crop. The net NAP or net federal crop insurance payments (NAP or crop insurance indemnities minus administrative fees and premiums) will be subtracted from the SDRP calculated payment amount. For Stage One, the total SDRP payment to indemnified producers will not exceed 90% of the loss and an SDRP payment factor of 35% will be applied to all Stage One payments. If additional SDRP funds remain, FSA may issue a second payment.

Stage Two

USDA will launch Stage Two of SDRP later this fall to provide relief for shallow or uncovered losses not addressed in Stage One.

Recipients Must Buy Crop Coverage

All producers who receive SDRP payments are required to purchase federal crop insurance or NAP coverage for the next two available crop years at the 60% coverage level or higher. Producers who fail to purchase crop insurance for the next two available crop years will be required to refund the SDRP payment, plus interest, to USDA.

For more information, visit USDA's official 2023/2024 Supplemental Disaster Assistance page at: https://www.fsa.usda.gov/resources/programs/20232024-supplemental-disaster-assistance_

Source: USDA



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\$675.9 Million Disaster Assistance Block Grant for Florida Farmers

Florida citrus growers welcomed U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Brooke Rollins to Southwest Florida on Monday, July 21, where she toured CPI Groves and announced \$675 million in disaster relief block grant funding to support Florida's agriculture industry, including Florida's iconic citrus sector. Secretary Rollins was joined by Florida citrus growers and industry leaders at CPI's headquarters in Felda.

Secretary Rollins' visit highlights the growing federal support for Florida's agriculture industry, including critical research and disaster relief funds that will help eligible citrus growers address crop-specific challenges and economic losses, empowering growers to recover and protect the long-term sustainability of Florida's signature crop.

"Secretary Rollins' announcement of \$675 million in disaster relief block grant funding is just the support Florida agriculture needs, and especially the targeted relief our citrus growers need as they work to overcome today's challenges and strengthen the infrastructure of the state's citrus industry in the years to come," said Matt Joyner, executive vice president and CEO of Florida Citrus Mutual.

Secretary Rollins' visit and announcement of \$675 million in disaster relief for Florida agricultural producers comes just weeks after President Trump signed the One Big, Beautiful Bill into law on July 4. This America First legislation includes measures to strengthen Florida's citrus industry by providing a long-term extension of the Emergency Citrus Disease Research and Extension Program through 2031, funding critical research to fight Huanglongbing (citrus greening) and other pests and diseases that threaten citrus crops.

The legislation also provides nationwide support for specialty crop producers, including citrus growers, through the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, which will provide \$85 million in 2025 and \$100 million in 2026. These funds support projects that mitigate pests and diseases, develop new crop varieties, promote sustainability and increase market access.

In addition to the One Big, Beautiful Bill and today's announcement of disaster relief funding, USDA Secretary Brooke Rollins announced Wednesday, July 9, the availability of more than \$16 billion in assistance through the Supplemental Disaster Relief Program (SDRP) for agricultural producers who experienced eligible crop losses due to natural disasters in 2023 and 2024. SDRP will complement the state's block grant program.

Courtesy of Florida Citrus Mutual

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The Potential of Trunk Injection for Fresh Market Citrus

By John M. Chater

Citrus tree trunk injection of antibiotics has been recently and widely used in Florida. The success of oxytetracycline (OTC) in sweet orange to mitigate huanglongbing (HLB or citrus greening) disease has been documented by the laboratory of Ute Albrecht, associate professor at the University of Florida. Some results suggest that OTC injection can improve Brix, ratio, fruit size, tree health, bacterial titer and yield. OTC injection has also been shown to reduce preharvest fruit drop, which is devastating to round orange and fresh market growers alike in Florida.

HLB disease affects both juice fruit and fresh fruit growers. Due to the effect of HLB on Brix and acidity, some round orange growers in Florida have considered selling their juice fruit to the packinghouse as fresh fruit. Examples of this shift in market strategy include the round orange cultivars N13-32 Hamlin, OLL-8, OLL-20 and Valquarius.

The requirements for a fresh market fruit to make packout in terms of Brix, titratable acidity and ratio are less stringent than those for sweet orange. This creates a special opportunity for juice orange growers that cannot reach the quality parameters required for Grade A juice in the HLB environment. These lower requirements allow growers a better chance to avoid fruit maturity test failure and haul rejection. In the Florida citrus industry in recent years, state Brix averages are coming in lower than 10, which does not meet the requirement for Grade A juice. If growers can harvest fruit earlier, losses from preharvest fruit drop seen later in the season in March and April can possibly be reduced.

Stakeholders have expressed a strong interest in OTC injection in fresh market citrus cultivars, and some growers have reported higher packout for Sugar Belle mandarin with trunk injections. Recently published University of Florida research indicates that OTC injection can significantly improve fruit quality of OLL-8 sweet orange scion in terms of solids to acid ratio, regardless of rootstock.



Oranges

A recent HortScience article by Emily S. Worthington, a scientist at the University of Florida, reports that OTC-treated OLL-8 sweet orange trees had a solids to acid ratio of 11.08. Non-treated trees had a solids to acid ratio of 10.15. This finding demonstrates that OTC trunk injection can have significant effects not only in Valencia, but also in OLL-8. This may be good news for those growers who decided to give OLL-8 a try.

Based on a Chater Lab project funded by the Citrus Research and Development Foundation, OLL-8 appeared to be larger and healthier than conventional Valencia

and other sweet orange budlines. The aforementioned OTC data was collected from a trial which was planted and conducted by a major processor, later to be taken over by the Chater Lab. The data seemed to indicate that OLL-8 trees could be a potential selection for growers. During the first several years of the trial conducted by the major processor and grower, it was determined that OLL-8 on UFR-4 rootstock was a top performer among dozens of combinations of early-, mid- and late-season cultivars.

See INJECTIONS on page 13

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INJECTIONS, Con't from page 11

During the OTC experiment, it appeared that OLL-8 on UFR-6 was also a top performer. UFR-6 grows off a smaller tree, which may be a benefit to those considering higher-density plantings.

The OLL-20 scion seemed to also respond well to OTC trunk injection, although those results are yet to be published. However, in the opinion of the author, OLL-8 is superior to OLL-20 in terms of tree health. But the major processor liked OLL-20 for reasons associated with flavor components, thus the Citrus Research and Education Center Plant Improvement Team released this selection.

Mandarins

In terms of mandarin varieties, OTC injection is being studied for Sugar Belle, Marathon, Bingo and other unreleased and yet to be released selections. The New Varieties Development and Management Corporation (NVDMC) encouraged the ongoing research.

Research by Joseph H. Volpe, a graduate student in the Chater Lab, indicates that OTC injection can increase Brix, solids to acid ratio, individual fruit weight and individual fruit size in terms of equatorial diameter. Interestingly, controlled release fertilizer (with polymer-coated micronutrients) increased fruit mass and diameter of Sugar Belle. Some growers have reported higher packout from their Sugar Belle trees under OTC trunk injection. It remains to be seen whether this will continue and improve after multiple injections. Perhaps coupling OTC with controlled release fertilizer may be a good research direction moving forward.

Preliminarily, trunk injection of OTC increased percent juice (juiciness), individual diameter and individual fruit weight of Bingo mandarin, which has not been planted recently due to fruit size. However, the flavor and HLB tolerance of Bingo is something to consider. One grower in North Florida reported success with Bingo in the gift fruit market. However, Bingo has been said to be too small for existing packinghouse infrastructure.

Research is continuing on trunk injection in these mandarin varieties and others. It appears OTC trunk injection may be a useful method for the fresh market, but more research is needed. If any stakeholder would like to see groves with these varieties, please contact the Chater Lab to arrange a visit.

John M. Chater (jchater@ufl.edu) is an assistant professor at the UF/IFAS CREC in Lake Alfred.



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.



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Pesticide License Testing Changes

FDACS is changing how pesticide licensing testing will be handled in the future. Pesticide licensing testing will be moving away from the UF/IFAS Extension offices, and toward Everblue (a private company) with in-person centers and an online option. UF/IFAS is amending their current exam administration process, with new testing procedures set to take effect as listed below.

Transition Timeline and Key Dates

Starting this summer, pesticide exam scheduling will shift to a new platform:

- **August 5, 2025:** Remote exams via Everblue will be offered and scheduled directly through Everblue. This option continues to offer a convenient and flexible testing option from any remote location. There will be no change for examinees other than the platform through which the scheduling occurs. The cost will remain at \$32.
- **October 1, 2025:** New in-person exam centers launch. The final day for UF/IFAS-administered free exams at extension offices will be September 30. Beginning October 1, Everblue will manage in-person testing centers across Florida, with exam scheduling conducted directly through their website, and will cost \$59.

Please note, in-person exams at UF/IFAS Extension Offices will remain available through September 30, 2025. Scheduling for these exams will continue to be managed through the existing UF/IFAS exam scheduling website. Stay tuned for more details regarding the new in-person exam centers as their launch approaches.

FDOC Budget

The Florida Citrus Commission (FCC) on June 30 unanimously approved a \$22.903 million 2025–26 preliminary operating budget for the Florida Department of Citrus (FDOC). That's a \$1.4 million increase over the previous fiscal year's budget.

The increase from the prior year is a result of \$1.1 million due to projects funded by additional state general revenue appropriations and a \$356,000 increase in U.S. Department of Agriculture grant funding. The budget includes a state-mandated 2% salary increase for state employees. The FDOC is a Florida government agency.

The majority of the funding comes from \$13.375 million in state general revenue. The FCC approved the preliminary operating budget after Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis signed the state's 2025–26 budget. The Florida state budget includes a record amount of funding for citrus programs. More than \$104.5 million has been allocated to the Citrus Research and Field Trial Foundation.

Source: FDOC

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July Final USDA Citrus Crop Forecast Update

The 2024-2025 Florida all orange forecast released on July 11 by the USDA Agricultural Statistics Board is 12.2 million boxes. The total is comprised of 4.60 million boxes of non-Valencia oranges (early, mid-season, and Navel varieties), unchanged from the June forecast, and 7.55 million boxes of Valencia oranges, up 150,000 boxes from the June forecast. The forecast of all Florida grapefruit production remains at 1.30 million boxes. Of the total grapefruit forecast, 140,000 boxes are white, and 1.16 million boxes are the red varieties. The Florida all tangerine and mandarin forecast is unchanged at 400,000 boxes. Lemons in Florida at 670,000, are up 70,000 boxes from the previous forecast.



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



Ag Land Tax Classifications

Florida's tax package, HB 7031, was signed into law by Gov. Ron DeSantis on June 30. The legislation includes a provision regarding the Greenbelt Law, or tax classification of agricultural land.

As of July 1, the revised law ensures that lands taken out of production through a state or federal eradication or quarantine program, such as the Citrus Health Response Program, shall continue to be classified as agricultural lands for tax-assessment purposes. This classification will remain in place for 10 years following the execution of a compliance agreement between the landowner and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services or a federal agency.

Prior to the passage of this legislation, agricultural lands could only be classified for up to five years. Now, agricultural lands that are currently enrolled in a five-year compliance agreement — and continue to meet all required terms and conditions — are eligible for a five-year extension to meet the new 10-year timeframe.

FYI - the Highlands County Property Appraisers Office has historically already extended the retention of green belt for local citrus properties that were taken out of active production due to disease concerns beyond the previous statutory requirement of five years, and assigned them a de minimis valuation for property tax calculation purposes.

Florida, like most states, has adopted use-value assessment for the purpose of ad valorem, or property, taxation. Agricultural producers are taxed at the income-earning potential of the land in agricultural production rather than at what a willing buyer would pay for the land.

Agricultural classification requires an application, by filling out and submitting the proper form, to a county property appraiser. In order to have land considered for agricultural classification, a landowner must apply to the property appraiser no later than March 1 of the year for which the classification is being sought.

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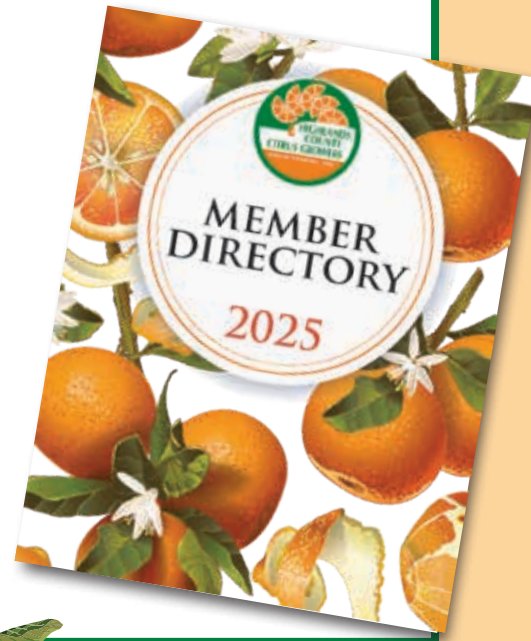
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2025 HCCGA Member Directory

The 2025 HCCGA Member Directory should come to all HCCGA Grower and Associate members via the US mail in late August. This 8.5 X 11 full color booklet is a valuable year round resource guide and includes Association information such as: Grower contact information, Associate Member Bios, Sponsorship Recognitions, Board Members, Officers, etc.

Thank you to the sixty-four Associate members who through their advertising 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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2025 Citrus Fun Shoot at Quail Creek - December 6th

Planning for the **2025 HCCGA Citrus Sporting Clays Fun Shoot** is now underway. So save the date, **Saturday December 6th**, on your calendar for our 28th Annual Citrus Fun Shoot and Prime Rib & Seafood luncheon.

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 clay target shooting, great food and some fabulous green bird station and raffle prizes.

We anticipate getting our shoot flier out to our membership and the public in early September 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 finalizing the process of getting our event's Title Sponsors into place. While we expect that almost all of last year's major sponsors will return for this year's shoot - 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.

Thank you to those key sponsors that have already renewed their major sponsorships for the 2025 Citrus Fun Shoot: **Farm Credit of Florida, CRAFT, Wedgworth Fertilizer, Glade & Grove Supply, AgNet Media, Magna-Bon, Trademark Nitrogen, Tropicana Brands Group, Hood Citrus Caretaking, Florida Power & Light, Syngenta, Everglades Equipment Group, Duke Energy, Perricone Farms/Natalie's, Cowpokes Watering Hole Restaurant and Alan Jay Fleet Sales.**

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



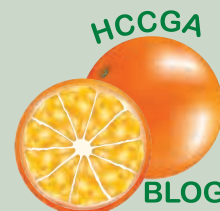
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Highlands County Ag Deputies

Highlands County Sheriff Paul Blackman has put together a very robust agricultural deputy program that focuses on Ag related issues and crimes. Remember to ***always*** report any crime, large or small, that impacts your Ag operation as it may be part of a pattern of similar offenses. In addition to utilizing the 911 system, you can also contact any of the deputies or Ag unit leadership below.

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863-381-2082

dhood@highlandssheriff.org

Captain John Barcinas

863-443-2142

jbarcinas@highlandssheriff.org

Lieutenant Scott Williams

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Citrus Soil and Leaf Sampling

We are currently in the optimum time of the year (*July-September*) to collect citrus soil and leaf samples for analysis. Soil and leaf sampling is a key component to the evaluation of a citrus nutrition program **AND** the Citrus BMP record keeping and documentation that is required today. Annual sampling, and its subsequent analysis, will provide you a good idea of the nutritional trends that have been occurring within specific grove blocs from year to year. ***Remember to retain records for all soil and leaf analysis results.***

Select representative trees from each grove bloc that you intend to manage nutritionally the same. Typically 15 to 20 trees are selected within a grove bloc for sampling and collect your leaf and soil samples from these trees. You can reduce the year to year variability in interpreting your analysis results by some degree by utilizing samples from the same trees from one year to the next. With the availability of affordable GPS technology nowadays, from a portable unit in your truck to most smart phones, the opportunity to utilize it in order to sample the same areas (trees) year after year should be taken advantage of.

Soil analysis can provide very specific information that you can use in your nutritional program decision-making. This information includes soil pH, phosphorous, calcium, magnesium and copper (*if you specifically request the copper analysis*).

From these 15 to 20 trees, take a single soil core of an 8 inch depth from within the irrigation pattern of each tree. Place the sampling cores in a clean nonmetal bucket for collection. When you have collected all the necessary cores from a production bloc -thoroughly mix the sample cores together. Take approximately one pint of the soil from the mixed sample for analysis.

Also, don't forget that not all soil testing laboratories use the same extraction procedures to determine soil nutrient levels. UF/IFAS recommends utilizing the Mehlich 3 extraction method (*it may even be required in future Citrus BMP manuals – so consider using it*). You may even want to consider sending samples from the same "bucket" to differing labs to compare results. Make sure if you change soil testing labs from one year to the next, or utilize different extraction methodologies, that you understand how to properly interpret the results and appropriate tables.

Leaf analysis can be utilized for all essential elements including those determined in the soil analysis. As mentioned above, leaf samples can, and should be, collected from the same trees as the soil samples. One hundred healthy, and representative, leaves from the 15 to 20 trees should be collected. These leaves should be 4 to 6 months old from non-fruiting twigs. This time frame will generally be between the months of July to September. In handling the leaf samples, keep the collected leaves out of the heat. If they cannot be sent out immediately, place in a refrigerator for overnight storage.

For macronutrient analysis, the leaves need not be washed. If micronutrient analysis is desired, then the leaves will need to be washed well to remove surface contamination. Washing of leaves can be done by soaking the leaves in a mild detergent solution and rubbing them between your thumb and forefinger. The washing of leaves should be done as soon as possible after collection. Some micronutrients are exceedingly difficult to remove (copper, manganese and zinc) through surface washing. This should serve as a reminder that it may be exceedingly difficult to make judgments utilizing leaf analysis if you are applying frequent nutritional sprays.



Two Genome-Edited Trees Are Approved

Two non-transgenic genome-edited orange plants — a Hamlin and a Valencia that may resist HLB — have been federally approved and are ready for Florida growers. Nian Wang, University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences eminent scholar endowed chair in biotechnology, reported this news in a June 17 virtual presentation.

The plants, which Wang termed “Eds1-edited,” have received regulatory approvals from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). He reported that the Hamlin and Valencia plants are ready for planting by growers but need propagation by nurseries.

Background

Before providing the advantages of and cautions relating to the new plants, Wang provided some background information. He noted HLB is a pathogen-triggered immune disease. *Candidatus Liberibacter asiaticus* (CLas), the bacterium that causes HLB, triggers systemic and chronic immune responses, including reactive oxygen species (ROS) production and callose deposition, leading to phloem cell death and HLB symptoms. Wang said that manipulation of either ROS or phloem callose deposition can partially reduce HLB damage.

Advantages

Wang gave several reasons to consider using the Eds1-edited plants in the fight against HLB in Florida groves:

- Editing of Eds1 abolishes CLas induction of ROS production, phloem callose deposition and phloem cell death. Thus, the plants are likely HLB tolerant.
- The plants have received APHIS and EPA approvals.
- There are no effects on citrus growth and fruit quality.

Cautions

Wang provided what he termed “cautions to adopt the non-transgenic Eds1-edited sweet orange against HLB and how to address them.” This includes the following points:

- Mutation of Eds1 likely reduces accumulation of salicylic acid (SA), thus reducing disease resistance against several biotrophic pathogens such as the citrus canker pathogen but increases resistance against phytophthora.
- This compromise is partially alleviated by rootstocks. Most commercial rootstocks are resistant or tolerant against most biotrophic pathogens.
- The compromise mainly results from reduced accumulation of SA. Foliar spray with SA can prevent this issue related to Eds1-edited plants.
- The benefit of improving disease tolerance against HLB using this approach likely outweighs the cost because most scion diseases, except HLB, have effective control approaches.

Wang provided more information about the plants, HLB and his work on other non-transgenic plants in his virtual presentation at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ByaK6xBhzjs

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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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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

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