

CENTRAL FLORIDA

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The Voice of Agriculture for Our Region

Livestock & Equine edition

UNCERTAIN TIMES

FLORIDA CATTLEMEN OPEN UP ABOUT RIDING OUT FLUCTUATIONS

INTERACTIVE EDUCATION

AGRI-FEST A KEY LINK FOR KIDS, AGRICULTURE



recently for the younger generations was this is their Pearl Harbor or 9/11 moment. As with those tragedies for America, we saw great strength and unity arise from the ashes.

We've seen truly amazing acts of kindness and selflessness play out in hospitals across the country. Healthcare practitioners—be it nurses, doctors, therapists, you name it—are working long days and nights so they can care for the sick. We've heard stories of first responders sacrificing their health for the greater good and going to unheard of lengths to help those in need. I've seen it firsthand as my bride and significant other of over 30 years heads off to the hospitals she serves

to dusk to ensure Americans have the food we need. Changes in demand and the supply chain have left a lot of Florida farmers in a bind, but we can't ignore the sacrifice they are making.

All these displays of true compassion are proof that we're all in this together. I hope you enjoy this edition of *Central Florida Ag News*. Stay safe, take care of each other, and God bless. **ag**

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The importance of soil health for HLB



CITRUS

- New greening-tolerant rootstocks and varieties now available
- Largest screened commercial citrus nursery in the US
- DNA tested true-to-type citrus varieties and rootstocks available
- Now contracting for 2020-2021



PEACHES

- Licensed grower of low chill peaches on Flordaguard and MP-29 rootstocks
- Low chill varieties ideal for central and south Florida climates
- Licensed for new released varieties
- Now contracting for 2020-2021

The importance of soil health for citrus trees facing citrus greening cannot be denied. Prior to citrus greening's arrival in The Sunshine State in 2005, citrus growers were fine with Florida's sandy soils and three-a-year fertilizer applications. Then, citrus greening, or HLB, hit.

Growers soon found that citrus greening has huge negative impacts on the root health of a citrus tree, causing a massive reduction in root mass. Because of this, the tree is unable to adequately take up water and nutrients, fruit production suffers, and the weakened tree eventually succumbs to the disease. Today, most growers remove infected trees once production starts to falter.

In all the research efforts being conducted to find a cure or treatment that will combat the negative effect of citrus greening focus on soil health, and precision fertilization has shown to have many benefits. For instance, a UF/IFAS Extension-organized citrus soil health field day in December 2019 focused on the efforts of two Central Florida growers who found success in rejuvenating groves that were "almost dead" when the growers paid attention



by Phillip Rucks

to soil health. One grower found success with "spoon feeding" nutrients, focusing on soil health, and utilizing cover crops, and he reported 300 boxes per acre growing Hamlins. The second grower had success using compost to amend the soil with organic matter. A UF/IFAS researcher is currently conducting research on cover crops and compost to get to the root of the growers' successes and to formulate recommendations for growers.

Similarly, an Ohio-based agricultural company, Locus Agricultural Solutions, which focuses on science-based solutions for productivity—including soil microbial health—conducted field trials in Florida on 700 acres of citrus trees using the patented highly concentrated soil amendment made of a microbial blend. Their trials concluded that the soil amendment led to an 80% increase in feeder root mass, an increased canopy density, and larger fruit size.

In the era of growing citrus infected by citrus greening, paying attention to soil health is a must.

EUCALYPTUS WINDBREAKS

- Hardy versatile tree that can grow nearly 40 ft in three years
- Provides crop protection from wind and disease
- Reduces soil loss, nutrition loss, agricultural chemical drift and irrigation loss
- Now contracting for 2020-2021

BAMBOO

- Completely Renewable
- Produces shoots and trunks yearly... no need to replant every year
- Absorbs carbon dioxide and releases 35% more oxygen than an equivalent stand of trees
- The newest superfood, the shoots are rich in nutrients- especially proteins, carbohydrates, minerals and fiber and is low in fat and sugar, and gluten free.

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