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**Spotlight on . . .**

**Lee County Leaders Gain Ag Education**

Members of the Lee County Chamber of Commerce Leadership Lee group visited SWFREC recently as the first stop of their agricultural education day. Center director Dr. Mike Burton kicked things off with a welcome and brief presentation titled “SWFREC: Kind of a Big Deal in Commercial Fruit Production.” He highlighted two issues at the forefront of ag: Huanglongbing or “greening disease” and efforts to combat bacteria transmitted by the invasive insect and the regulation of mineral fertilization rates for commercial vegetable production.

“The rest of the challenges facing citrus and vegetable production,” Dr. Burton noted, “didn’t go away when HLB and phosphorus regulation came to hold much attention.”

(See more)

**Gulf Citrus Members Target Greening**

The Gulf Citrus Growers Association (GCGA) conducted its board meeting and membership luncheon at SWFREC last month. More than 50 members and guests participated in the event, which was led by GCGA president Wayne Simmons.

SWFREC plant physiologist Dr. Ute Albrecht served as moderator of a panel discussion about grower experiences regarding oxytetracycline injections to help citrus trees combat greening disease.
Panelists included (left-right) Joby Sherrod with Alico, Inc; David Wheeler with Wheeler Farms; and Ronnie English with Cooperative Producers, Inc. Discussions ranged from injection treatment protocols and results seen thus far to effects on trees and future plans.

Coverage of the meeting was included on the Citrus Industry magazine’s website in “Gulf Citrus Grower Panel Discusses Trunk Injection,” an article authored by editor-in-chief Frank Giles. He noted that “Overall, the growers believe the treatments have been positive. But expectations have come back down to earth somewhat after trees initially responded vigorously soon after treatments. Moving forward, determining the age at which a tree might be too old to benefit from trunk injection will be important.”

To see the story, click here: Gulf Citrus Grower Panel Discusses Trunk Injection - (citrusindustry.net).

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Congratulations!

Student Congratulations are in Order!

Diderot Saintilma graduated with his Master’s degree in horticultural sciences during the winter ceremony in Gainesville. His research project title was “Combining Cover Cropping and Compost Application in Tomato (Solanum Lycopersicum) Production for Suppressing Weeds and Enhancing Yield.” His committee chair was weed scientist Dr. Ramdas Kanissery. Congratulations, Diderot!

Caroline Tardivo and Gabriel Pugina, both SWFREC Ph.D. students, passed their qualifying exam seminars. Caroline presented “New Rootstocks for Citrus Production in Florida: Challenges from the Nursery to the Field” and Gabriel presented “Integration of Cultural Practices to Diminish HLB Consequences in Citrus Production.” Plant physiologist Dr. Ute Albrecht chairs both students’ committees. Congratulations, Caroline and Gabriel!
Ph.D. student Ruby Tiwari took first and second place, respectively, in poster competitions at the Weed Science Society of America (WSSA) and Southern Weed Science Society (SWSS) annual meetings in late January in San Antonio, Texas. Her poster title for both was “Effects of Preemergence S-metolachlor Alone or its Co-application with Fertilizer Enhancer and Chelated Iron on Weed Control Efficacy and Crop Safety in Tomato (Solanum lycopersicum) Plasticulture Production.” Her committee chair is weed scientist Dr. Ramdas Kanissery. Congratulations, Ruby!

**Peer-reviewed Publications**

- **Evaluation of the Sensitivity of Podpsphaera xanthii to Several Fungicides for Management of Powdery Mildew on Squash in Florida** has been published in Crop Protection. Research scientist Dr. Katherine E.M. Hendricks and vegetable pathologist Dr. Pam Roberts are authors.

- **Steam Application with Paraquat to Control Goat Weed (Scoparia dulcis) in Citrus Orchards** has been published in Smart Agricultural Technology. Precision ag engineer Dr. Yiannis Ampatzidis and weed scientist Dr. Ramdas Kanissery are second and third authors, respectively. First and second authors are Jaafar Abdulridha, a former engineer in Dr. Ampatzidis’ program, and Dr. Mahesh Bashyal, a former post-doc in Dr. Kanissery’s program.

- **Evaluation of Trunk Injection Techniques for Systemic Delivery of Huanglongbing Therapies in Citrus** has been published in HortScience. Former SWFREC Ph.D. student Dr. Leigh Archer and plant physiologist Dr. Ute Albrecht are authors.

**Extension Publication**

- **Biological Soil Crusts in Agroecosystems.** SWFREC authors include former Ph.D. candidates Dr. Kira Sorochkina and Dr. Clayton J. Nevins and their advisor, soil microbiologist Dr. Sarah Strauss.
SWFREC in the News

➢ The article “Taking Available Tools to the Grove” appeared in the January issue of Citrus Industry magazine. Written by Frank Giles, the article highlights trials being conducted by UF/IFAS researchers to help combat the effects of citrus greening disease. Included is information about plant physiologist Dr. Ute Albrecht’s work to inject oxytetracycline to deliver therapy directly into a tree’s vascular system and citrus horticulturist Dr. Fernando Alferez’ work using brassinosteroids on trees after removal of individual protective covers to prolong tree health. To see the article, click here: https://swfrec.ifas.ufl.edu/docs/pdf/news-items/2024-01-Citrus_Industry-Albrecht-Alferez.pdf.

➢ The February issue of Citrus Industry magazine features the article “Fall Tree Health after Initial Trunk-injection Treatments,” written by Frank Giles and Maegan Beatty. Included is a sidebar story titled “Early Observations on Second Applications,” which features plant physiologist Dr. Ute Albrecht’s research on oxytetracycline injections into citrus tree trunks to promote overall health. To learn more, click here: https://swfrec.ifas.ufl.edu/docs/pdf/news-items/2024-02-Citrus_Industry-Albrecht.pdf.

Grower Handbooks Available

Two 2023-2024 grower publications are available online!

The Vegetable Production Handbook of Florida provides guidance on vegetable production and includes extensive pesticide tables for each type of crop covered. This link enables printable sections: 2023-2024 Vegetable Production Handbook | EDIS (flvc.org). SWFREC authors featured in the book include weed scientist Dr. Ramdas Kanissery, entomologist Dr. Jawwad Qureshi, and vegetable pathologist Dr. Pam Roberts.

The Florida Citrus Production Guide contains general pesticide information, horticultural practices, and chapters on mites/insects/nematodes, diseases, and weeds. The book is available with printable sections here: Ask IFAS: Florida Citrus Production Guide (ufl.edu). SWFREC authors featured in the book include plant physiologist Dr. Ute Albrecht, citrus horticulturist Dr. Fernando Alferez, citrus pathologist Dr. Ozgur Batuman, weed scientist Dr. Ramdas Kanissery, entomologist Dr. Jawwad Qureshi, vegetable pathologist Dr. Pam Roberts, and soil microbiologist Dr. Sarah Strauss.
Kids Corner

Online education games for grade 4 school students can be found at http://www.myamericanfarm.org/games/grades/grade-4! My American Farm, a program of the American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture, features “fun farm games for cool kids.” Grade 4 games include “From Seed to Shirt,” “Equipment Engineer,” “Wild Water Adventures,” “That’s Life...Let’s Grow,” “Spin-N-Solve,” “Operation Peanut Butter,” and “Farmers Market Challenge.” Each game description lists ag-related categories that are covered in that segment, from ag commodities and irrigation to soil health and careers.

Upcoming Events

March 26-29
International Research Conference on Huanglongbing
Riverside Convention Center, Riverside, CA
SWFREC speakers include: citrus horticulturist Dr. Fernando Alferez (Disease Management: Field Trials session), postdoctoral research associate Dr. Kellee Britt-Ugartenemendia (Vector Control: Genome to Field session), entomologist Dr. Jawwad Qureshi (Whole Plant Responses and Management session), soil microbiologist Dr. Sarah Strauss and citrus pathologist Dr. Ozgur Batuman (Disease Management: Oxytetracycline-based Approaches session), and plant physiologist Dr. Ute Albrecht (Keynote Speaker Address).
For more info and to register: Home - International Research Conference on Huanglongbing VII (cvent.com).

April 3, 8:00am-2:00pm
The Florida Citrus Show
UF/IFAS Indian River Research and Education Center and U.S. Horticultural Research Laboratory, Fort Pierce
For more info: https://citrusindustry.net/florida-citrus-show/.

April 9, 8am-3pm
Florida Citrus Growers’ Institute
South Florida State College, Avon Park
Two SWFREC faculty are among the spears: plant physiologist Dr. Ute Albrecht (“Update on Trunk Injection”) and weed scientist Dr. Ramdas Kanissery (“Optimal Weed Control in Citrus: Latest on Chemical Strategies and Non-chemical Alternatives”).
For the full program and registration link, click here: 2024 Institute Brochure 2-29-24 (ufl.edu).

April 17
UF/IFAS Produce Safety Alliance Grower Training
UF/IFAS Collier County Extension, Naples
A one-day course for produce growers and packers who fall under the Food Safety Modernization Act Produce Safety Rule.
For more info and to register, click here: https://psa041724.eventbrite.com/. For more food safety educational offerings, both in person and online, contact taylorlangford@ufl.edu.

August 21-22
Citrus & Specialty Crop Expo
Florida State Fairgrounds, Tampa
For more info: https://citrusexpo.net/.

Julie A. Carson, Marketing and Communications Specialist
UF/IFAS Southwest Florida Research and Education Center
2685 SR 29 North | Immokalee, FL 34142
P: 239-658-3462 | F: 239-658-3469 | carsonj@ufl.edu
http://swfrec.ifas.ufl.edu