

'Grower Trials' coming to Citrus Industry

Series will highlight grower efforts to manage greening and canker

By Steve Futch and Tim Spann

Over the next year, a monthly series will be developed to highlight both independent grower trials being conducted to manage citrus greening and canker, as well as trials conducted or monitored by UF/IFAS researchers in growers' groves throughout Florida's diverse citrus industry. Both greening and canker, and associated insect pests — Asian citrus psyllid and citrus leafminer — pose production challenges that must be addressed through innovative, dynamic and proactive programs. Many of the short- to mid-term management strategies for dealing with these diseases and pests will arise from progressive and thoughtful industry managers who will, out of necessity, develop management solutions to these and future problems.

When new problems or threats have arisen in the past, innovative growers have found creative solutions to address the problems through a number of

effective practices or trials that have provided economical and viable solutions. Trials are currently being conducted by both large and small growers in nearly every production region throughout Florida. Many of these trials are innovative and dynamic trials offering the potential to gain insight from researchers' experiences and describe which practices work or may not work to suppress these important pest/disease complexes.

Grower trial articles will summarize the goal of the trial as well as pertinent details, results, interpretation, and immediately useful or anticipated results. Although many growers are aware of what their neighbors and friends are trying, this information does not usually receive industry-wide distribution. Wider dissemination of results will aid the entire industry in addressing common production issues. These articles will provide growers positive results from trials that have worked or practices to avoid where results were less than anticipated or lacked sufficient disease suppression or pest control.

In addition, the broader distribution of the results from these trials will be of tremendous benefit to UF/IFAS researchers. The results of grower trials may shed light on avenues of research as

yet explored and help develop long-term solutions to these diseases. One example of this is the grower observations in Vietnam about the effects of guava on psyllid activity and greening spread. Widespread planting of guava has other problems and is not viewed as a viable solution (see Citrus Industry, March 2007 page 18), but it has stimulated research by both USDA and IFAS researchers to determine what is causing the effect and if it can eventually be developed into a useable product.

Topics over the next year may highlight grower observations, material selection, scouting for greening, greening symptoms, aerial application of pesticides to suppress psyllids, fogging, canker suppression tactics and more. If you have a program or trial that you would like to highlight or share, please contact any of the citrus extension agents around the state to allow them to review and report your results.

Through such cooperative efforts and open sharing of trial results, the Florida citrus industry will develop successful programs to address greening and canker and promote economically viable solutions. Sharing your information and successes will help the Florida citrus industry recover to where it should be. We'll all benefit from that.