Lessons learned from previous hurricanes, however devastating, can be useful in moving the citrus industry forward.

Lemon scions from the UF/IFAS Citrus Research and Education Center lemon project were propagated on US 897 (14) and US 942 (11) rootstocks and planted near Vero Beach in June 2017, just two months prior to Hurricane Irma. These selections represented the top twelve UF/IFAS CREC lemon clones previously selected for increased peel oil production.

The grove and young trees were completely under water from Hurricane Irma for at least seven days, with flood debris found at the very tops of the young trees. Tree survival about 12-14 months after the flooding event ranged from 30 to 90% across the scions and both rootstocks. Trees of three different scions had the poorest survival in general, on both rootstocks; it was surprising to note that different lemon scions had different abilities to come through this severe flooding event. One of the scions, Lis D5 1-9-46, was the best survivor, and it is one of the UF/IFAS seedless Lisbon lemon clones.

Unrelated to the flooding damage, four of these scions produced fruit with few or no seeds. UF/IFAS researchers will take lessons learned from Hurricane Ian and develop useful information for Florida citrus growers.