

Current Research Objectives

Dr. Tripti Vashisth, Assistant Professor, Horticultural Sciences, CREC
(tvashisth@ufl.edu)

Research topic: HLB-associated fruit drop

Primary Research Objective(s):

- Understanding the cause of HLB-associated pre-harvest fruit drop.
- Developing strategies to reduce the fruit drop in commercial groves.

Research Goal: HLB-affected trees often go through a heavy pre-harvest fruit drop. Up to 40% fruit drop has been recorded at many locations. Therefore, the goal is to understand the cause of fruit drop to develop effective control strategies.

Outcomes to date: We have found that highly symptomatic trees (severely declined) display high amount of fruit drop and the dropped fruit are often small in size. No horticultural strategy such as pruning or thinning is effective in reducing the drop. In addition, plant hormones are not effective in reducing the fruit drop. Based on our findings, it is recommended that growers not spend their resources on pruning, thinning, or spraying plant hormones on trees in late stages of decline. It is also recommended to grower to remove severely declined trees from groves as they may drop high percentage of fruit and rest fruit may not be of good quality, the resources spent on such tree may not be profitable.

Funding source for this objective(s): State Legislative funding for the UF/IFAS Citrus Initiative