

## Summary of 2012 Ridge and Indian River-South Florida Citrus Custom Rate Charges

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This year's annual questionnaire surveys were conducted through the mail from April through June, 2012. Twenty-three citrus caretakers participated in the Central Florida-Ridge area survey, while fifteen citrus caretakers participated in the Indian River-South Florida area survey. Cooperatives, their members, and growers performing their own cultural practices were not included in this study. The author expresses sincere thanks to those caretakers and their staffs who took time from their busy schedules to report their custom charges.

A majority of Indian River-South Florida growers perform their own cultural practices. During the past few years, there has been a consolidation among citrus caretaker firms along with citrus grove acreage resulting in fewer citrus caretakers participating in the annual study. Also, from 2004 to 2012, primarily due to the citrus canker eradication program, real estate development, the removal of HLB-citrus greening symptomatic trees, and normal attrition from an older citrus tree population, there has been a 39% reduction of the citrus acreage in the Indian River-South Florida region compared to an 18% acreage reduction in the Central Florida-Ridge citrus region.

The itemized custom rates, expressed as the low and high rate reported, along with the average of the rates for the 2012 surveys are the most current available (Tables 1 and 2). During the past several years, more citrus caretakers have

been reporting the use of **electronic sensing technology** as shown in the **spraying and fertilizer sections** on the 2012 summary of the citrus caretaker custom rate charges. The 2012 custom citrus caretaker rates showed an overall 2.6% average increase over the 2011 rates. Custom rates for growers who are members of cooperatives and costs for growers who conduct their own cultural practices may differ from these average caretaker rates.

Over 80% of the caretakers participating in the survey indicated their grower clients are applying additional foliar nutrients on their citrus trees. The number of foliar nutrient applications ranged from three to six per year. Average cost (including application cost and nutrient materials) was \$55 per application.

Additional information on citrus budgeting and cost analysis and harvesting charges (pick, roadside and hauling) can be obtained by contacting your County Extension Citrus Agent or going to the UF/IFAS EDIS website: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu> or UF/IFAS CREC website:

[www.crec.ifas.ufl.edu/extension/economics](http://www.crec.ifas.ufl.edu/extension/economics)

Table 1. A listing of 2012 custom rates reported by twenty-three Ridge citrus caretakers

Grove Practice	Unit	Range of Rate Reported	Average Rate <sup>y</sup>	Comments	
<b>CULTIVATION AND EQUIPMENT:</b>					
Labor	Hour	\$13.50- \$21.00	\$16.30	Plus transportation	
Mechanic Labor	Hour	26.29- 50.00	42.91		
Mechanic Labor with Truck	Hour	45.00- 65.00	51.88		
Rotovate	Hour	35.00- 50.00	41.25		
Disc 7'	Hour	28.00- 46.00	38.39		
Disc 7'	Acre	11.00- 16.00	13.67		
Disc 9'-10'	Hour	35.50- 42.00	41.10		
Disc 9'-10'	Acre	11.00- 15.00	12.84	One-way discing	
Chop	Acre	11.00- 15.00	12.81	Averaged \$38.60/hour	
Mow 5'-7'	Acre	11.00- 15.00	12.67	Averaged \$32.13/hour	
Mow 9'-12'	Acre	12.00- 15.00	13.59	Averaged \$38.25/hour	
Mow 15'-16'	Acre	10.00- 15.00	13.75		
Herbicide <sup>z</sup> (Strip/Band--Single Boom)	Acre	14.00- 21.50	16.21	Plus materials.	
Herbicide <sup>z</sup> (Strip/Band--Double Boom)	Acre	13.50- 18.90	15.34	Plus materials. Averaged \$45.46/hour	
Herbicide <sup>z</sup> (Chemical Mow)	Acre	3.50- 8.00	6.06	Plus materials	
Plow	Hour	34.75- 45.00	40.74		
Bush Hog	Hour	35.00- 52.00	42.10	Averaged \$16.25/acre	
Backhoe	Hour	40.00- 56.00	48.00		
Pickup Truck with Driver	Hour	28.50- 50.00	35.90	One reporting \$25.00/day	
Flatbed Transport Truck with Driver	Hour	50.00- 90.00	70.00		
Tractor with Driver	Hour	30.00- 42.50	35.15		
Water/Supply Truck	Hour	28.00- 42.50	35.72		
ATV with Driver	Hour	24.50- 41.00	29.52		
<b>SPRAYING:<sup>z</sup></b>					
<b>PTO AIR BLAST SPRAYER</b>					
1,000 Gallon Tank with Electronic Sensing					
		Low	High	Average	
500 GPA	Acre	\$40.00-	\$45.00	\$41.67	
250 GPA	Acre	32.00-	42.50	36.31	
150 GPA	Acre	31.00-	38.00	34.25	
125 GPA	Acre	27.50-	35.00	30.75	
100 GPA	Acre	23.00-	30.00	27.89	
50 GPA	Acre	—	—	25.00	
Curtec Sprayer @ 25 GPA (325 Gallon Tank)	Acre	—	—	26.00	
Low Volume Ground Spray for Psyllid Control					
Every Other Middle	Acre	6.00-	9.50	7.14	Average 25 acres/hour
Every Middle	Acre	10.00-	16.00	12.64	Average 15 acres/hour
<b>FERTILIZE AND SOIL AMENDMENTS:<sup>z</sup></b>					
Inject Liquid Fertilizer into Irrigation System	Hour	\$35.00-	\$41.00	\$39.00	Truck plus labor and plus materials; One reporting \$60.00
Inject Liquid Fertilizer into Irrigation System	Acre	2.00-	3.50	2.88	per application
Dry (Bulk)	Acre	8.50-	12.00	10.61	
Dry (Bulk) VRT Spreader - Electronic Sensor	Acre	10.00-	15.00	12.35	
Lime or Dolomite	Acre	8.50-	14.20	10.37	
Fertilize Young Trees: <sup>z</sup> Hand Spread	Hour	13.50-	21.00	16.30	Plus transportation and materials
Fert. Spreader	Hour	35.00-	40.50	36.83	Plus materials; Average \$10.00/acre
Ant Bait Application with ATV @ \$4.00 per acre					
<b>IRRIGATION:</b>					
Microsprinkler	Per Run	30.00-	35.00	31.75	Start/stop and supervision; truck and driver; Avg. \$50/run
Microsprinkler/Drip Irrigation Maintenance - \$3.64/acre/month					Check/repair microsprinkler irrigation system-plus materials

(OVER)

Table 1. A listing of 2012 custom rates reported by twenty-three Ridge citrus caretakers (cont'd.)

Grove Practice	Unit	Range of Rate Reported		Average Rate <sup>z</sup>	Comments
<b>REMOVING TREES:</b>					
Tree Shearing (Cutting Tree at Ground Level)	Hour	\$60.00-	\$80.00	\$68.11	Average trees sheared: 5 to 15 trees/hour
Front-end Loader	Hour	55.00-	75.00	65.92	Average trees removed: 5 to 15 trees/hour
Mulching Trees with a Grinder Head	One reporting \$135/hour to \$210/hour depending on machine size. 15 to 70 trees per hour depending on tree size				
<b>PRUNING:</b>					
Rehab or Freeze Damage Pruning – Power Saw with Operator - Averaged \$24.18/hour					
Limb Lifter/Tree Skirt Trimmer (Single Side)	Acre	—	—	23.50	Average Range: 3-5 acres per hour
Hedging:					
Single Side Tractor Pulled	Acre	—	—	25.00	
Double Side Tractor Pulled	Acre	—	—	23.75	
Double Side Tractor Mounted	Acre	—	—	27.50	
Double Side Tractor Mounted	Hour	180.00-	266.00	212.75	Average Range: 5-10 acres per hour
Double Sided Self Propelled	Hour	225.00-	300.00	281.88	average Range: 8-10 acres per hour
Topping:					
Topping – Tractor Pulled	Acre	—	—	34.67	Averaged \$152.50/hour
Topping – Tractor Mounted	Hour	—	—	231.00	
Topping – Self Propelled	Hour	255.00-	325.00	291.00	Average Range: 8-15 acres per hour
Removing Brush:					
Haul Brush out of Grove	Hour	45.00-	60.00	50.56	Truck or tractor-trailer plus 2 people
Front-end Loader (Push Brush)	Hour	60.00-	80.00	67.27	2-10 acres/hour
Chop/Mow Brush	Hour	35.00-	52.00	41.25	3-6 acres/hour; \$12.50/acre
<b>COLD PROTECTION:</b>					
Install Wraps and Annual Maintenance	Tree	\$0.32-	\$0.45	\$0.38	
<b>OTHER CUSTOM RATES:</b>					
Solid Set Planting	Per Tree	\$1.30-	\$1.60	\$1.48	Stake, plant and first watering
Plant Resets	Per Tree	1.75-	2.50	2.15	Stake, plant and first watering; cost depends on number resets per acre
Travel/Set-up Charge	Per Trip	—	—	62.50	
Grove Management Charge/Month:					
Supervising Grove Care Operations	Acre	2.50-	7.00	3.95	In addition to caretaking charges; One reporting 6% of equipment labor charge
Handling Fruit Marketing	Box	0.10-	0.25	0.18	
Supervising/Handling Chemicals/Fertilizer	10% to 20% of materials cost				
Total Reported Acreage Provided Grove Service to:					
	Acre	700-	12,645	3,878	Total acres reporting: 65,923

<sup>z</sup>Plus materials. Caretakers reporting rates include labor, tractor and sprayer; supply truck included by most caretakers.

<sup>y</sup>Calculated by dividing the total number of caretakers reporting a grove practice rate into the sum reported. Unless otherwise stated, labor included with all charges.

<sup>x</sup>Low acres is for 2 years regrowth hedging; high acres is for annual maintenance hedging.

Source: Ronald P. Muraro, Extension Farm Management Economist, Lake Alfred CREC, September 2012.

Table 2. A listing of 2012 custom rates reported by fifteen Indian River and South Florida citrus caretakers

Grove Practice	Unit	Range of Rate Reported		Average Rate <sup>y</sup>	Comments
<b>CULTIVATION AND EQUIPMENT:</b>					
Labor	Hour	\$ 15.50-	\$20.00	\$17.30	Plus transportation and equipment
Mechanic Labor	Hour	45.00-	75.00	57.86	Labor and service truck
Rotovate	Hour	40.00-	60.00	48.75	
Disc 7-8'	Hour	40.00-	50.00	43.75	
Disc 10-12'	Hour	40.00-	50.00	44.25	
Mow: 9-10'	Acre	10.00-	14.50	12.83	Average \$44.00/hour
15-16'	Acre	12.50-	14.00	13.13	Average \$49.50/hour
V-Mower	Acre	12.00-	14.00	12.88	Average \$50.75/hour
Herbicide <sup>z</sup> (Strip/Band–Single Boom)	Acre	14.00-	15.00	14.67	Plus materials
Herbicide <sup>z</sup> (Strip/Band–Double Boom)	Acre	13.50-	15.00	14.13	Plus materials
Herbicide <sup>z</sup> (Chemical Mow)	Acre	3.50-	7.00	4.44	Plus materials
Plow	Hour	37.00-	50.00	43.00	
Backhoe	Hour	45.00-	60.00	54.69	
Bush Hog	Hour	—	—	45.00	
Middle Buster	Hour	37.00-	45.00	41.75	With tractor and driver
Mound Builder	Hour	—	—	45.00	With tractor and driver
Grader Blade	Hour	38.00-	45.00	41.67	Tractor/blade and driver
Water Truck with Driver	Hour	39.00	40.00	39.39	
Pickup Truck with Driver	Hour	30.00-	40.00	36.71	
Flatbed/Transport Truck with Driver	Hour	50.00-	75.00	65.00	
Tractor with Driver	Hour	35.50-	52.00	40.69	
ATV with Driver	Hour	24.00-	30.00	27.35	
<b>SPRAYING:<sup>z</sup></b>					
<b>PTO AIR BLAST SPRAYER</b>					
1,000 Gallon Tank with Electronic Sensing					
		Low	High	Average	
500 GPA	Acre	\$40.00-	\$45.00	\$41.60	
250 GPA	Acre	32.00-	38.75	35.69	
150 GPA	Acre	30.00-	38.00	33.40	
125 GPA	Acre	27.00-	32.00	29.67	
100 GPA	Acre	23.00-	33.00	27.19	
50 GPA	Acre	—	—	25.00	
Low Volume Ground Spray for Psyllid Control – Every Other Middle	Acre	6.00-	9.50	7.08	
Aerial Fixed Wing: \$5.25 @ 2-3 gallons/acre; \$6.50 @ 5 gallons/acre; \$7.81 @ 10 gallons/acre; \$9.38 @ 15 gallons/acre; \$15.00 @ 20 gallons/acre					
<b>FERTILIZING:<sup>z</sup></b>					
Dry (Bulk)	Acre	\$ 8.50-	\$11.00	\$ 9.75	Plus materials
Dry (Bulk) VRT Spreader-Electronic Sensor	Acre	9.50-	13.50	11.25	Plus materials. One reporting \$160/hour
Lime or Dolomite	Acre	8.50-	10.00	9.17	Plus materials
Fertilize Young Trees: <sup>z</sup> Hand Spread	Hour	15.50-	20.00	17.30	Plus transportation and materials; 10¢-15¢/tree
<b>IRRIGATION:</b>					
Start/Stop, Supervise Irrigation System	Hour	\$28.00-	\$38.00	\$32.75	Per each run
Start/Stop, Supervise Irrigation System	Acre	5.00-	7.00	5.85	Per each run
Ditch Mower	Hour	40.00-	50.00	45.00	
Water Furrow Disc	Hour	37.00-	50.00	42.00	
Water Furrow Cleaner	Hour	42.00-	50.00	45.67	
Water Furrow Shaper (non-laser)	Acre	—	—	32.00	Once every two years
Rotary Ditcher or Auger	Hour	35.00-	45.00	40.33	
Microsprinkler/Drip Irrigation Maintenance	Acre/Month	4.00-	7.85	5.57	Check & repair system; parts extra; average 3 times/yr

(OVER)

Table 2. A listing of 2012 custom rates reported by fifteen Indian River and South Florida citrus caretakers (cont'd.)

Grove Practice	Unit	Range of Rate Reported		Average Rate <sup>2</sup>	Comments
<b>REMOVING TREES:</b>					
Front-end Loader	Hour	\$65.00-	\$85.00	\$74.00	Avg. range 10-20 trees per hour
Tree Shearing (Cutting Tree at Ground Level)	Hour	65.00-	75.00	71.25	Avg. range 5-15 trees per hour
Prepare Site for Replanting	Tree	\$0.25 - \$1.00			
<b>PRUNING:<sup>3</sup></b>					
Rehab or Freeze Damage Pruning – Power Saw with Operator - Averged \$24.18/hour					
Limb Lifter/Tree Skirt Trimmer (Single Side)	Acre	—	—	23.50	
Average Range: 3-5 acres per hour					
<b>Hedging:</b>					
Single Side Tractor Pulled	Acre	—	—	25.00	
Double Side Tractor Pulled	Acre	—	—	23.75	
Double Side Tractor Mounted	Acre	—	—	27.50	
Double Side Tractor Mounted	Hour	180.00-	266.00	212.75	
Average Range: 5-10 acres per hour					
Double Side Self Propelled	Hour	225.00-	300.00	281.88	
Average Range: 8-20 acres per hour					
<b>Topping:</b>					
Topping – Tractor Pulled	Acre	—	—	34.67	Averaged \$152.50/hour
Topping – Tractor Mounted	Hour	—	—	231.00	
Topping – Self Propelled	Hour	255.00-	325.00	291.00	
Average Range: 8-15 acres per hour					
<b>Removing Brush:</b>					
Haul Brush out of Grove (Front-End Loader)	Hour	70.00-	75.00	71.25	Tractor & driver, trailer and 2 workers: \$54.50/hour
Mow/Chop Brush	Hour	40.00-	60.00	51.63	
<b>OTHER CUSTOM RATES:</b>					
Plant Trees (Solid Set)	Tree	\$1.35-	\$2.00	\$1.57	Varies as to density
Plant Trees (Resets)	Tree	1.50-	3.00	2.44	Varies as to the number of resets
<b>Grove Management Charge/Month:</b>					
Supervising Grove Care Operations	Acre	3.50-	7.00	5.11	In addition to caretaking charges
Handling Fruit Marketing	\$0.05-\$0.25/box – For Supervising and Marketing fruit				
Supervising/Handling Chemicals/Fertilizer	5% to 20% of materials cost				

<sup>2</sup>Plus materials. Caretakers reporting rates include labor, tractor and sprayer; supply truck included by most caretakers.

<sup>3</sup>Calculated by dividing the total number of caretakers reporting a grove practice rate into the sum reported. Unless otherwise stated, labor included with all charges.

<sup>4</sup>Low acres is for 2 years regrowth hedging; high acres is for annual maintenance hedging.

Source: Ronald P. Muraro, Extension Farm Management Economist, Lake Alfred CREC, September 2012.