

# New IFAS website for mechanical harvesting

By Barbara Hyman and Fritz Roka

**D**o you have questions about citrus mechanical harvesting, but don't know who to ask? Now there's an opportunity to find out more and get answers to your questions at the new IFAS Citrus Mechanical Harvesting Web site: <http://citrusMH.ifas.ufl.edu>

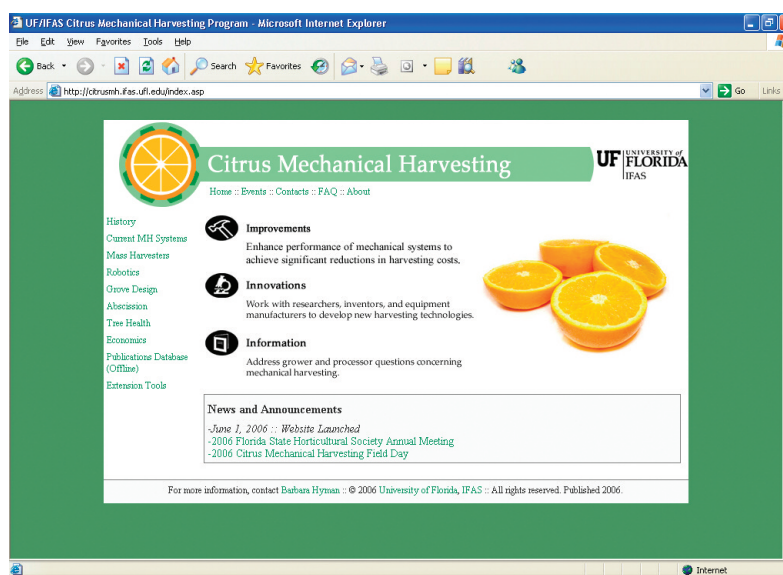
This Web site, a product of the University of Florida's IFAS Citrus Mechanical Harvesting Program, was created to provide the latest educational information on citrus mechanical harvesting technology.

The Web site provides access to basic information on the existing harvesting systems as well as the latest research findings, and provides a forum to ask questions regarding mechanical harvesting. The design of the Web site centers around five program areas reflecting the input of industry advisory committees. These include abscission, machine enhancements (both for mass harvesters and robotic technology), tree health, grove design and economics.

To learn more about what research is being done and accomplishments made in these program topics, go to each topic listed on the menu toolbar located on the left side of the page. Here, for example, you can be kept up to date on registration of the abscission compound CMNP. Progress summaries can be found on late season harvesting experiments, development of yield monitoring equipment and other machine enhancements such as on-board canker decontamination.

Learn more about the concepts behind a "model grove" being planted at the Southwest Florida Research and Education Center (SWFREC) and download a decision-aid tool that will help a grower evaluate whether a particular mechanical harvesting contract is profitable. In each page, you will find the most recently published information, most of which you can download and read at your leisure. If the information is not electronically accessible, you can request materials via an email address listed on the Web site.

Under the Current MH Systems page, there is a description of each harvesting system in commercial use. For each machine system, you can download a report that provides performance data collected over five years by an IFAS research team. Here you will see data on recovery, removal, system



efficiency, and machine productivity, to name a few topics. Also provided for your viewing are photos and videos of each of the machines being used under different grove conditions.

For history buffs, there is a History page with information on the various machines that were developed since the early 1960s, including photos and, hopefully in the near future, videos of early equipment designs. Jodie Whitney, one of the early IFAS researchers

of mechanical harvesting, created this section using his collection of articles, photos and films of these times.

The Publication Database is a great source of research information. Here you will find articles, old and new, that you will be able to download and read. The articles are from various publications and date back to 1958, covering a variety of subjects related to citrus mechanical harvesting. Here you will find articles on abscission, machine systems, pickup machines, catch frames, pruning, and tree spacing, to name a few.

In addition to the five topic areas, you will find several other areas of interest. A menu toolbar across the top of the page will take you to several additional areas. The Current Events page will list upcoming activities by month and provide a Web site link if more information is available. The Contact Page lists the IFAS faculty involved with the mechanical harvesting project.

Most importantly, there is a FAQ (frequently asked questions) page. The FAQ is repeated throughout the Web site, prompting you to ask questions or provide comments and suggestions for the mechanical harvesting project. Your questions and comments will be forwarded to the appropriate team member, who in turn will promptly respond.

Citrus mechanical harvesting has the potential to significantly reduce harvesting costs and boost on-tree returns. In many cases, however, the transition from hand to mechanical harvesting will not be easy and will require changes to existing grove and harvesting operations. Hopefully, the information found on this Web site will ease the transition and accelerate the process to fully realize the economic potential of citrus mechanical harvesting.