



Enhancing citrus communication

By Jack Payne, jackpayne@ufl.edu, @JackPayneIFAS

The University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) has an immense volume of citrus science to share — and that’s been a problem.

In the grove, you can’t just spray and pray. Similarly, in communications, we can’t just disseminate the information and hope for the best.

That’s why UF/IFAS has updated not just what we share, but *how* we share it. The result: You get information more quickly. You can also find exactly what you’re looking for and bypass what’s not relevant to your grove.

WEBSITE

That’s what citrusresearch.ifas.ufl.edu is all about. We’ve corralled all the know-how and discovery pouring out of our research centers in Lake Alfred, Immokalee, Fort Pierce and Gainesville and put it in one spot.

The new website has a tab specifically for HLB management information. Other tabs lead you to where we’ve been (Presentations, such as those at this summer’s Citrus Expo), where we are now (Ongoing Research) and even where we’re headed (Research Agenda).

We hope you’ll continue to read the news of our breakthroughs on the pages of this magazine. But we know you may be looking for something on your smartphone while you’re in the grove, and there needs to be easy navigation through the treasure trove of knowledge collected by one of the world’s leading citrus research organizations.

NEWSLETTER

In addition to the website, we have launched a monthly UF/IFAS Citrus Team newsletter with up-to-the-minute research results, new ideas and recommendations to keep groves in production in the HLB era.

Sign up at citrusresearch.ifas.ufl.edu to have the newsletter sent to your email inbox.

PODCAST

Our new “All In For Citrus” podcast is up and running. You can listen at length (CitrusIndustry.net/allinforcitrus) on your schedule to what leaders such as Michael Rogers, director of the UF/IFAS Citrus Research and Education Center, are thinking about.

CITRUS PRODUCTION GUIDE

We’re using more modern communications tools to meet you where you are. Sometimes, though, an old-fashioned, dog-eared, printed-on-paper manual is what you need. That’s what we hope becomes of a book we released in August.

Our 2018 Citrus Production Guide is a 180-page technical handbook that covers all aspects of grove establishment and management from 42 contributing authors. It’s free of charge

in digital form at the new citrus website. If you want us to do the printing, please contact your citrus Extension agent to get a copy.

TALENTED SPOKESPERSON

In addition to technology and tools, we’ve added another communications element — talent. If you heard Rick Dantzler speak at the Citrus Celebration in Fort Myers or read his statements in the media, you know he has a way with words.

Dantzler was hired to lead the Citrus Research and Development Foundation because of his clear communication, a crucial skill in leading an agency that must communicate the impact of tens of millions of dollars in citrus research investment.

Dantzler’s communication skills have helped growers across the state. When he ran the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Florida Farm Service Agency, he persuaded legislators to extend the Tree Assistance Program to growers whose losses are attributable to HLB, not just to hurricanes and other natural disasters.

A recent survey by the UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education found that UF/IFAS is the most trusted source for agricultural information, ranking even higher than government agencies and commodity associations.

That information is less useful when it’s hiding in plain sight. The website, the newsletter, the podcast and spokespeople like Rick Dantzler aim to put the most important information front and center, quickly and clearly. Discovery is hard enough in the lab. There’s too much at stake to make growers and other industry representatives hunt for what UF/IFAS is up to. 🍊

Jack Payne is the University of Florida’s senior vice president for agriculture and natural resources and head of the UF Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.

Got citrus research questions?
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