



Citrus Expo: Conversation starter

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

At last year's Citrus Expo, a grower grabbed a handout about fertilization from the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) booth. Citrus Extension specialist Tripti Vashisth gave out the posters to reinforce what had been covered in her talk.

Nearly eight months later, the grower called Vashisth. He had finally had the time to look closely at the handout, and he had questions. The conversation resumed where it had left off last summer.

That's the magic of Citrus Expo. It starts conversations that UF/IFAS aims to continue year-round.

CONNECT WITH RESEARCHERS

Citrus Expo brings together more UF/IFAS scientists with more producers than any other event. It's a great setting for those communicating the old-fashioned and still most effective way — face-to-face.

To promote that communication, we're trying something new this year. Day two of Citrus Expo will feature office hours with some of our citrus scientists. We call it the meet-the-specialist session. Not everyone wants to ask their question in front of an audience. Or, if you're like me, you think to yourself as you're walking away from a session, "Oh, I wish I had asked that question!" Meet-the-specialist is a second chance to ask in one-on-one conversation what you wished you had asked before.



Jack Payne and a team of University of Florida citrus scientists look forward to connecting with growers at Citrus Expo.

UF/IFAS shares its citrus science in so many ways — handouts, electronic documents, field days, demonstration trials, podcasts, you name it.

Our team has come up with yet another way, free to all attendees of the expo. The Florida Citrus Production Guide has information you can take home and use immediately for grove management.

GET HANDS-ON

Also new to Citrus Expo this year is a chance to get your hands dirty. The do-it-yourself training will prepare you to monitor more often and without extra lab costs or wait times.

The hands-on session is Vashisth's idea, based on a program she did in Highlands County and growers' response. By now, I think you can see

who's done a lot of the preparation to make Citrus Expo 2019 different and potentially more immediately applicable to your business than in past years.

ASK QUESTIONS

Of course, some things will be the same. You'll have the chance to visit with Extension agents and specialists, including — guess who — Vashisth, at the UF/IFAS booth in the middle of the expo hall floor.

There will again be a lineup of UF/IFAS citrus experts presenting their latest research. They will take your questions, too.

What makes Citrus Expo special, in my opinion, is what happens in the one-on-one interactions. It puts a face and a smile behind the science that keeps your groves productive. And it gives you the space and time to have the kind of two-way conversations that lead to places you won't get on the phone or by email.

If you can't wait until Aug. 14–15 to connect with UF/IFAS at Citrus Expo, you can contact — do I really have to say it? — Vashisth. She's at tvashisth@ufl.edu or 863-956-8846.



Citrus Extension specialist Tripti Vashisth has played a key role in planning the 2019 Citrus Expo educational program.

We hope you bring as many questions to the expo as you can ask in two days, and that you don't need to wait eight months to follow up. But if you do, we'll be ready. 🍊

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.