



Water Works

Several months ago, the National Weather Service Climate

Prediction Center (CPC) indicated this spring would be warm and dry in the Southeast. That prediction turned out to be true. March was one of the driest months ever, and wildfires have cropped up in parts of Central Florida. A La Niña condition has also developed, and the Southeast Climate Consortium points out that the classic La Niña pattern promotes a spring that is generally warmer and 20% to 40% drier than normal in the Southeast. In contrast to a dry spring, the CPC predicts a wet summer that corresponds with the hurricane season. Hurricanes have caused flooding from which we are only now recovering.

Get Educated

This dramatic change from drought to flooding emphasizes the importance of water and the need for good information on water. There are numerous books and Web sites that deal with all aspects of water. One of the best books for citrus growers is the University of Florida Institute



of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) book *Water and Florida Citrus*, edited by Dr. Brian Boman. This includes articles on all aspects of water and irrigation management

relating to citrus.

Web sites dealing with water are also abundant. Most people in Florida agriculture have heard about EDIS (Extension Data Information Source) at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>. EDIS is the primary source for all UF/IFAS Extension publications. It has more than 7000 publications, and articles are added daily. In addition to information on water, a recent article on fertilizer costs and nitrogen sources at edis.ifas.ufl.edu/SS457 will be of interest to citrus growers.

Answers On Demand

Another Web site on water that I have found to be helpful is www.aces.edu/waterquality. It was developed by Dr. James Hairston, a professor in the agronomy and soils department at Auburn University, along with other colleagues. This site is an Internet database that provides an amazing amount of information on water. One of the best features is a series of frequently asked questions (FAQ) on topics that are relevant to many of us. The FAQs are organized according to topics such as nutrients and pesticides, water conservation, watershed management, wastewater, environmental restoration, pollution assessment, drinking water, and water policy.

This site currently has more than 200 articles, 2200 Web links, and 3500 questions and answers in an index system. There is a useful glossary that has almost 10,000 words and phrases. Searching by key word is quite easy.

In answering the question "How much water is used in the U.S. each day for irrigation of crops?" it points out that "it takes about 50 glasses of water to grow enough oranges to produce one glass of orange juice." This would be about right for a good-producing Florida Hamlin grove and would apply to irrigation water only, not rainfall.

While some of the material is oriented toward Alabama and other locations, there is a great deal of information relevant to Florida growers and homeowners. Topics extend well beyond agriculture. For people using well water in rural areas, there are an extensive number of questions and answers on drinking water standards, testing, disinfection, treatment, and contamination.

There are even particularly good

questions on water scams. When it comes to answering questions on a large number of areas related to water and water quality, this is an excellent site as well as a fun and helpful place to browse.

