

Summary of 2011 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, 2011. Twenty-two citrus caretakers participated in the Central Florida-Ridge area survey, while fourteen 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 2011, primarily due to the citrus canker eradication program, real estate development, and the removal of HLB-citrus greening symptomatic trees, there has been a 38% reduction of the citrus acreage in the Indian River-South Florida region compared to a 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 2011 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 section** on the 2011 summary of the citrus caretaker custom rate charges. The 2011 custom citrus caretaker rates showed an overall 2% average increase over the 2010 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.

About 70% 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 \$48 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

Table 1. A listing of 2011 custom rates reported by twenty-two Ridge citrus caretakers

Grove Practice	Unit	Range of Rate Reported		Average Rate ^y	Comments
CULTIVATION AND EQUIPMENT:					
Labor	Hour	\$13.25-	\$20.00	\$15.55	Plus transportation
Mechanic Labor	Hour	34.25-	45.00	40.42	
Mechanic Labor with Truck	Hour	43.00-	75.00	55.98	
Rotovate	Hour	35.00-	52.00	41.79	
Disc 7'	Hour	28.00-	42.50	36.58	Averaged \$10.38/acre
Disc 9'-10'	Hour	32.00-	50.00	42.33	
Disc 9'-10'	Acre	9.75-	13.67	12.04	One-way discing
Chop	Acre	8.75-	13.50	11.75	Averaged \$36.40/hour
Mow 9'-12'	Hour	35.00-	42.50	39.17	
Mow 5'-7'	Acre	8.75-	15.00	11.92	Averaged \$36.13/hour
Mow 9'-12'	Acre	8.75-	15.00	12.32	
Mow 15'-16'	Acre	10.00-	15.00	12.58	Averaged \$45.75/hour
Herbicide ^z (Strip/Band--Single Boom)	Acre	14.00-	20.00	15.96	Plus materials. Averaged \$38.13/hour
Herbicide ^z (Strip/Band--Double Boom)	Acre	14.00-	18.90	15.35	Plus materials. Averaged \$42.38/hour
Herbicide ^z (Chemical Mow)	Acre	3.50-	8.00	5.80	Plus materials
Plow	Hour	34.75-	52.00	42.46	
Deviner	Hour	38.00-	52.00	42.98	
Bush Hog	Hour	35.75-	65.00	42.75	Averaged \$14.05/acre
Backhoe	Hour	45.00-	56.00	49.63	
Pickup Truck with Driver	Hour	30.00-	48.00	37.51	One reporting \$25.00/day
Flatbed Transport Truck with Driver	Hour	50.00-	100.00	77.14	
Tractor with Driver	Hour	28.00-	52.00	36.58	
Water/Supply Truck	Hour	28.00-	52.00	38.14	
ATV with Driver	Hour	23.50-	42.00	30.05	
SPRAYING:^z					
PTO AIR BLAST SPRAYER					
1,000 Gallon Tank with Electronic Sensing					
		Low	High	Average	
500 GPA	Acre	\$35.00-	\$50.00	\$40.00	
250 GPA	Acre	30.00-	40.00	35.80	
150 GPA	Acre	28.00-	36.50	31.58	
125 GPA	Acre	26.00-	30.00	29.42	One reporting \$125/hour
100 GPA	Acre	24.00-	30.00	26.75	
Curtec Sprayer @ 25 GPA (325 Gallon Tank)	Acre	—	—	26.00	
Low Volume Ground Spray for Psyllid Control					
Every Other Middle	Acre	5.00-	13.00	7.54	Average 25 acres/hour
Every Middle	Acre	7.50-	16.00	12.81	Average 15 acres/hour
FERTILIZE AND SOIL AMENDMENTS:^z					
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	2.75-	3.50	3.19	per application
Dry (Bulk)	Acre	8.00-	13.20	10.98	
Dry (Bulk) VRT Spreader - Electronic Sensor	Acre	10.00-	16.75	12.88	
Lime or Dolomite	Acre	8.00-	13.00	10.43	
Fertilize Young Trees: ^z Hand Spread	Hour	13.25-	20.00	15.55	Plus transportation and materials
Fert. Spreader	Hour	30.00-	45.00	38.17	Plus materials; Average \$9.19/acre
Ant Bait Application with ATV @ \$4.00 per acre					
IRRIGATION:					
Microsprinkler	Hour	30.00-	35.00	31.25	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 2011 custom rates reported by twenty-two Ridge citrus caretakers (cont'd.)

Grove Practice	Unit	Range of Rate Reported		Average Rate ^y	Comments
REMOVING TREES:					
Tree Shearing (Cutting Tree at Ground Level)	Hour	\$65.00-	\$80.00	\$68.33	Average trees sheared: 5 to 15 trees/hour
Front-end Loader	Hour	55.00-	80.00	66.42	Average trees removed: 5 to 15 trees/hour
Mulching Trees with a Grinder Head	Hour	—	—	115.00	7 to 15 trees per hour depending on tree size
PRUNING:					
Rehab or Freeze Damage Pruning – \$5.50/tree; Power Saw with Operator - Averaged \$25.70/hour					
Hedging:					
Double Sided (Self Propelled)	Hour	\$205.00-	\$275.00	\$257.50	Averaged: \$24.25/acre; Avg. range 8-20 acres per hour
Double Sided (Tractor Mounted)	Hour	254.00-	300.00	269.33	
Topping:					
Double Sided (Self Propelled)	Hour	255.00-	275.00	268.33	Averaged: \$30/acre; Avg. range 8-15 acres per hour
Double Sided (Tractor Mounted)	Hour	235.00-	300.00	256.67	
Limb Lifter/Tree Skirt Trimmer (Double Sided)	Hour	21.00-	26.00	23.43	Averaged: \$30/acre; Avg. range 3-5 acres per hour
Removing Brush:					
Haul Brush out of Grove	Hour	45.00-	55.00	49.88	Truck or tractor-trailer plus 2 people
Front-end Loader (Push Brush)	Hour	58.00-	80.00	65.62	2-10 acres/hour
Chop/Mow Brush	Hour	35.00-	50.00	40.63	3-6 acres/hour; \$12.50/acre
COLD PROTECTION:					
Install Wraps and Annual Maintenance Cost for Wraps	Tree	\$0.30-	\$0.45	\$0.38	
OTHER CUSTOM RATES:					
Solid Set Planting	Per Tree	\$1.30-	\$1.50	\$1.49	Stake, plant and first watering
Plant Resets	Per Tree	1.75-	3.00	2.33	Stake, plant and first watering; cost depends on number resets per acre
Grove Management Charge/Month:					
Supervising Grove Care Operations	Acre	2.50-	7.00	3.82	In addition to caretaking charges; One reporting 6% of equipment labor charge
Handling Fruit Marketing	Box	0.10-	0.25	0.17	
Supervising/Handling Chemicals/Fertilizer	10% to 20% of materials cost				
Total Reported Acreage Provided Grove Service to:					
	Acre	600-	12,660	3,517	Total acres reporting: 59,784

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

^y 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.

^x 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 2011.

Table 2. A listing of 2011 custom rates reported by fourteen Indian River and South Florida citrus caretakers

Grove Practice	Unit	Range of Rate Reported		Average Rate ^y	Comments
CULTIVATION AND EQUIPMENT:					
Labor	Hour	\$ 14.50-	\$20.00	\$17.09	Plus transportation and equipment
Mechanic Labor	Hour	40.00-	65.00	52.86	Labor and service truck
Rotovate	Hour	40.00-	60.00	47.50	
Disc 7-8'	Hour	35.00-	45.00	37.55	One reporting \$12.00/acre
Disc 10-12'	Hour	40.00-	55.00	45.00	One reporting \$14.50/acre
Mow: 7-8'	Acre	12.50-	16.00	13.83	
9-10'	Acre	12.00-	16.00	13.63	Average \$36.50/hour
15-16'	Acre	12.00-	16.00	13.30	Average \$46.50/hour
V-Mower	Acre	10.00-	13.50	12.20	Average \$46.50/hour
Herbicide ^z (Strip/Band-Double Boom)	Acre	12.00-	15.00	13.83	Plus materials
Herbicide ^z (Chemical Mow)	Acre	3.00-	5.00	3.83	Plus materials
Plow	Hour	37.00-	45.00	39.67	
Backhoe	Hour	47.00-	63.00	51.33	
Bush Hog	Hour	—	—	45.00	
Middle Buster	Hour	37.00-	45.00	41.75	With tractor and driver
Mound Builder	Hour	—	—	40.00	With tractor and driver
Grader Blade	Hour	38.00-	45.00	41.67	Tractor/blade and driver
Water Truck with Driver	Hour	37.00	40.50	39.17	
Pickup Truck with Driver	Hour	35.00-	45.00	41.83	Average miles traveled per year: 20,400 miles
Flatbed/Transport Truck with Driver	Hour	50.00-	75.00	66.67	
Tractor with Driver	Hour	35.50-	50.00	39.44	
ATV with Driver	Hour	24.00-	30.25	26.46	
SPRAYING:^z					
PTO AIR BLAST SPRAYER					
1,000 Gallon Tank with Electronic Sensing					
		Low	High	Average	
500 GPA	Acre	\$41.00-	\$45.00	\$42.75	
250 GPA	Acre	30.00-	38.75	34.46	
125 GPA	Acre	27.00-	32.00	29.29	
100 GPA	Acre	25.00-	28.00	26.25	
50 GPA	Acre	20.00-	25.00	22.78	
Low Volume Ground Spray for Psyllid Control (every other middle)	Acre	5.00-	8.00	6.00	Average 40 acres/hour
Aerial Fixed Wing:	\$5.39/acre @ 5 gallons/acre; \$7.42/acre @ 10 gallons/acre; \$8.50/acre @ 15 gallons/acre; One reporting \$4.50 @ 3 gallons/acre				
FERTILIZING:^z					
Dry (Bulk)	Acre	\$ 9.25-	\$12.00	\$10.45	Plus materials
Dry (Bulk) VRT Spreader-Electronic Sensor	Acre	8.50-	13.00	10.42	Plus materials. One reporting \$155/hour
Lime or Dolomite	Acre	8.50-	10.75	9.21	Plus materials
Fertilize Young Trees: ^z Hand Spread	Hour	14.50-	20.00	17.09	Plus transportation and materials; 15¢/tree
Fert. Spreader	Average:	\$7.63/acre; \$36.00/hour			Plus materials
IRRIGATION:					
Start/Stop, Supervise Irrigation System	Hour	\$28.00-	\$50.00	\$37.75	Per each run
Start/Stop, Supervise Irrigation System	Acre	4.50-	6.00	5.17	Per each run
Ditch Mower	Hour	35.00-	60.00	48.13	One reporting \$90/hour for 25 ft reach
Water Furrow Disc	Hour	40.00-	45.00	42.69	
Water Furrow Cleaner	Hour	42.00-	63.00	50.00	
Water Furrow Shaper		\$66.50/hour (non-laser); \$90/hour (laser)			
Rotary Ditcher or Auger	Hour	37.00-	50.00	42.33	
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 2011 custom rates reported by fourteen Indian River and South Florida citrus caretakers (cont'd.)

Grove Practice	Unit	Range of Rate Reported		Average Rate ^z	Comments
REMOVING TREES:					
Bulldozer	Hour	\$ —	\$ —	\$100.00	
Front-end Loader	Hour	65.00-	90.00	74.00	Avg. range 10-20 trees per hour
Tree Shearing (Cutting Tree at Ground Level)	Hour	70.00-	85.00	73.75	Avg. range 5-15 trees per hour
Mulching Trees with a Grinder Head	Hour	—	—	115.00	7 to 15 trees per hour depending on tree size
Prepare Site for Replanting	Tree	\$0.25 - \$1.00			
PRUNING:					
Rehab or Freeze Damage Pruning – \$5.50/tree; Power Saw with Operator - Averaged \$23.89/hour					
Hedging:					
Double Sided (Self Propelled)	Hour	\$205.00-	\$275.00	\$257.50	
		Average: \$24.25/acre; Avg. range 8-20 acres per hour			
Double Side (Tractor Mounted)	Hour	254.00-	300.00	269.33	
Topping:					
Double Sided (Self Propelled)	Hour	255.00-	275.00	268.33	
		Average: \$30/acre; Avg. range 8-15 acres per hour			
Double Sided (Tractor Mounted)	Hour	235.00-	300.00	256.67	
Limb Lifter/Tree Skirt Trimmer	Acre	21.00-	26.00	23.43	
		Average: \$30/acre; Avg. range 3-5 acres per hour			
Removing Brush:					
Haul Brush out of Grove (Front-End Loader)	Hour	70.00-	85.00	74.00	Tractor & driver, trailer and 2 workers: \$67/hour
Mow/Chop Brush	Hour	45.00-	65.00	51.99	
OTHER CUSTOM RATES:					
Install Tree Wraps	Per Wrap	0.25-	0.35	0.31	
	Per Tree				
Plant Trees (Solid Set)	Tree	\$1.00-	\$2.00	\$1.43	Varies as to density
Plant Trees (Resets)	Tree	2.00-	3.00	2.34	Varies as to the number of resets
Grove Management Charge/Month:					
Supervising Grove Care Operations	Acre	4.00-	7.50	5.59	In addition to caretaking charges
Handling Fruit Marketing		\$0.05-\$0.25/box – For Supervising and Marketing fruit			
Supervising/Handling Chemicals/Fertilizer		5% to 15% of materials cost			

^zPlus materials. Caretakers reporting rates include labor, tractor and sprayer; supply truck included by most caretakers.

^yCalculated by dividing the total number of caretakers reporting a grove practice rate into the sum reported. Unless otherwise stated, labor included with all charges.

^xLow acres is for 2 years regrowth hedging; high acres is for annual maintenance hedging.

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