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https://ifas.ufl.edu/covid19-information-updates/

As of today, September 25, 2020 GCREC remains closed to the public. Our research continues with a limited number of essential staff, and we are so grateful for their continued dedication. For information contact Christine Cooley <u>ccooley@ufl.edu</u>.



## Alicia Whidden is Retiring!

Hugh Smith, Associate Professor GCREC Entomology

After seventeen years of service as a UF IFAS Extension agent, and almost forty years of service to local growers, Alicia Whidden is retiring. Alicia has lived in Polk County for most of her life, but was born in Jacksonville. Her father's family was from Polk County, and her mother's family was from Syria. Alicia attended Florida Southern College in Lakeland where she majored in Botany. One of her college professors recommended her for the job of biologist at the former GCREC strawberry lab in Dover, where she worked from 1981 until 1998. During this time Alicia received an MS in Microbiology from the University of South Florida. At Dover, Alicia worked for plant pathologist Charlie Howard, the namesake of the 'Sweet Charlie' strawberry variety that was selected by Charlie and later released by Craig Chandler. "Charlie was in a class by himself," Alicia says of Charlie Howard, who produced one of the first Florida strawberry varieties, called 'Dover.' She also worked for Earl Albregts, who was the soil scientist who worked on plastic mulch and drip irrigation used in strawberries and for whom Dr. Chandler named the variety 'Earlibrite'.

When Alicia first went to work at the strawberry lab, the majority of strawberry varieties grown in Florida were from California. Through the work of Dr. Howard and Dr. Chandler, and folks like Alicia, Florida varieties now predominate. Another fundamental change that Alicia observed was the adoption of drip irrigation in strawberry, which had far reaching consequences for local agriculture. Plastic mulch was in use in the early 1980s, but up until that time strawberry growers relied primarily on overhead irrigation. Most fertilizer was applied at planting. The adoption of drip irrigation and fertigation industrywide by the early 90's enabled growers to take better advantage of established fields and increased the practice of planting a second crop after the strawberry season had finished. Cantaloupes, squash, and jalapeño peppers were originally the most common second crops planted by strawberry growers. Prior to the adoption of drip, growers would typically plant a second crop only if they had experienced a poor strawberry season. Growers now routinely follow strawberry with a vegetable crop, producing a variety of cucurbit and pepper crops, as well as eggplant and okra.

Alicia joined Hillsborough County Extension in January 2003. In addition to producers of strawberries and vegetable crops, Alicia has worked with blueberry, blackberry and peach growers. "Hillsborough County Extension has been an awesome place to work. I have great co-workers," says Alicia. "It has been a blast working with growers. Being an agent lets you be a student, always learning, always interacting with researchers and growers." When asked what makes a good agent, Alicia says that having an outgoing personality makes it easier, but it is important to be inquisitive and to have no problem saying "I don't know, but I will find the best source to answer your question." In retirement, Alicia plans to spend her time gardening, quilting, and volunteering. Alicia Whidden is a local treasure, and she will be missed.

## Strawberry Breeding Program Updates

Vance M. Whitaker, Associate Professor GCREC, vwhitaker@ufl.edu

In the following article, I will provide some reminders regarding management of 'Florida Brilliance' and an update on two new variety releases.

'Florida Brilliance' Management Reminders

In the April newsletter, Dr. Agehara and I provided several management recommendations for 'Florida Brilliance'. I will briefly recap some of those here, in case you missed the previous article. We are all still learning how to manage this variety going into the second season of full-scale production. In February during the "spring flush", plants of all strawberry varieties in

Florida become more vigorous in response to increasing daylengths. This is also accompanied by decreased fruit quality, including uneven surface color, lower soluble solids and softer skin. These changes in fruit quality are also influenced by variety, and it is clear that 'Florida Brilliance' suffers a little more from soft skin during the "spring flush" than others.

The primary management recommendations for increasing skin firmness are to reduce nitrogen fertilization and decrease watering volumes. Just before the spring flush period we strongly recommend reducing water and fertilizer for 'Florida Brilliance', especially if the period coincides with unseasonably warm weather. Keep in mind that 'Florida Brilliance' requires less nitrogen overall than 'Florida Radiance', and that overfertilization of this variety can cause other problems such as a higher percentage of misshapen fruit.

### New Strawberry Releases Coming Soon

Two new selections have been approved for release by IFAS and are going through the commercialization process. Trade names have not been finalized yet but should but should be chosen in the next six months.

The first release is an early shortday variety with excellent fruit shape and quality. It has slightly lower November and December yields than 'Florida Brilliance' but had excellent January yields this past season, and thus may



Figure 1. A new release with excellent shape and flavor.

complement the yield curve of 'Florida Brilliance'. It has excellent flavor, with taste panels ranking it equal to or even better than Sensation® 'Florida127' depending on the harvest date. It has high brix through the season similar to Sensation® 'Florida127'. The grower cooperators will have slightly larger trials during the coming season, with commercial quantities expected to be available for the 2021-2022 season.

The second release is a white-fruited strawberry. While white-fruited varieties have been popular in Japan for some time, this is expected to be the first such variety on the market in the US. It has a pink blush on the sun-side and red achenes when ripe, with a unique pineapple-like aroma. The fruit are smaller than the current varieties, similar to the size of 'Festival' fruit on average. Yield is about <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> of the current varieties.

Larger trial quantities will be tested this coming season, with commercial quantities of plants available for the 2021-2022 season. The FSGA and its member growers are exploring licensing



Figure 2. A new white-fruited release with unique appearance and aroma. Photo credit: Cristina Carrizosa, UF/IFAS Communications.

models that will promote the development of white strawberries as a product, which may involve substantial resource investment and limited availability over the first few years.

#### Conclusions

As we continue to learn how to manage 'Florida Brilliance' optimally, In just over two years from now, the industry will have two new varieties. One will hopefully quickly take its place alongside 'Florida Brilliance' and Sensation® 'Florida127' in the industry, while the other will represent

another type of product altogether to expand the market opportunities for our growers. For any questions, please contact Vance Whitaker at 813.419.6608.

# New Blackberry Cultivars in Trials

Zhanao Deng, Professor GCREC , zdeng@ufl.edu

Florida growers interested in growing blackberries as an alternative crop have been looking for cultivars that are adapted to Florida's warm climate. To meet this need, we began trialing blackberry cultivars at the Gulf Coast Research and Education Center (GCREC) several years ago. So far five floricane-fruiting cultivars



('Apache', 'Natchez', 'Osage', 'Ouachita' and 'Von') and three primocane-fruiting cultivars ('Prime-Ark® 45', 'Prime-Ark® Freedom', and 'Prime-Ark® Traveler') have been trialed. 'Osage' outperformed the other four floricane-fruiting cultivars with an average yield of 3.9 pounds of berries per plant, and 'Prime-Ark® Freedom produced the highest yield, an average of 6.3 pounds of berries per plant. In May, 2020, we introduced into our trials 'Caddo' and 'Ponca', the latest releases from the University of Arkansas blackberry breeding program, which has been the primary supplier of blackberry cultivars for growers in Florida and other southeastern United States. The first batch of 'Caddo' and 'Ponca' plants were transplanted to our orchard two weeks ago. Another batch of plants will be set up in the orchard in September or October. These cultivars will be tested under a new plant management scheme that is being developed by our plant physiologist, Dr. Shinsuke Agehera, and his graduate student. According to the release statement by the University of Arkansas blackberry breeding program, 'Caddo' was released in 2018. It is high-yielding and thornless, and have erect canes with medium-large fruit that is sweet with very good fruit flavor. 'Ponca' was released in 2019. It is also high-yielding, thornless, erect canes with medium-sized fruit with enhanced sweetness and good post-harvest handling traits. This cultivar is the sweetest cultivar released to date. Plants have shorter internodes and new canes emerge about or after fruit harvest is done. We hope these cultivars can do well in Florida so Florida growers have more choices of cultivars and better berry yields!

Our blackberry breeding effort has resulted in development of a number of promising lines. Several lines have been established in tissue culture; one of the lines has been sent out to growers for "real world" tests. In the meantime, a replicated trial was set up last month at GCREC to test this line's yield potential and berry quality against commercial cultivars. Another replicated trial has been planned to begin in about two months later. These lines were selected in our low chilling environment and under our high disease and insect pest pressure, we expect to them to continue performing well in these trials. If so, then a new generation of UF-bred blackberry cultivars will be available to Florida growers.

### **Online UF/IFAS CCA training course!**

Apologize for the delay as we set the process up through the Canvas software that UF uses for all its online academic instruction. You may recall that this CCA session was originally scheduled in April but due to Covid-19 safety issues, had to be postponed. As the pandemic related measures are still in place, out of an abundance of caution, the sessions are being offered online, which can be accessed at your convenience.

#### Please read the following details about this program carefully

This course consists of a total of ten presentations leading to 10 CCA CEUs, out of which 5.0 CEUs will be in Nutrient Management and 5.0 CEUs will be in Pest Management. The course and the presentations will be **open and available from Oct 1**<sup>st</sup> **through Oct 31**<sup>st</sup>, **2020** for your access and completion. The link below will take you to an information screen, where you put your name, email, and pay the fees by credit card. The registration fee for this session is \$60.00. Once the fee is paid, you will receive an email with login instructions. Keep the login credential safe but handy for accessing during this course period and for future courses too. With your login information, the course and the presentations can be accessed 24x7 during the entire month of October, at your convenience.

The registration will be <u>open from now until Oct  $31^{st}$ </u> and so you can register any time before that. The course will end on Oct  $31^{st}$  and so no matter when you register after today, you will have to complete the course by Oct  $31^{st}$ . Therefore, we suggest that you register as early as possible so you will have the maximum time and flexibility to complete and earn all the CEUs at your convenience.

There is a pre-/post-test for this course that you are all familiar with. Also, there are a few quiz questions built into individual presentations to ensure that the transfer of information is

successful. Please note that none of the quizzes or tests are graded. All names will be deleted once the summary data is collected and anonymized. The tests are only to evaluate the effectiveness of our programs and various presentations. There is also an evaluation sheet for your comments/feedback on each of the presentations. Your comments and feedback are extremely important to us and are valued highly. So, please do not forget to provide your comments.

You can access the presentations in any order that you choose. At the end of each presentation, you will find the sign-in sheet with the QR code for the CCA-CEU credits. The QR codes can be scanned using your cell phones and you will receive the credits instantly.

This course also offers 5.0 CEUs for the FDACS Pesticide program. Those of you needing those credits will have to download/print the FDACS attendance form at the end of each presentation. Add your information and sign it and send it to the FDACS to the address on the form directly.

The registration for this course is open now! Click this link to the registration page and the course: <u>https://ifas-nutrientsystems.catalog.instructure.com/</u>

All IFAS faculty interested in participating are requested to send me an email (reply to this message) for receiving a code for registration. If you have any questions on any aspect, please feel free to email Dr. Mylavarapu at raom@ufl.edu.

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# Healthy Pond Certification Program

Dr. Mary Lusk's reports that her extension program has just launched a new program called the Healthy Pond Certification Program. It's an online class for pond managers and landscaping personnel and covers practices to keep ponds functional and healthy from a wildlife and water quality perspective. Those who take the class receive CEU credits as well as a Healthy Pond Manager Certificate to

display in their workplace. Anyone interested in the class can shoot her off an email at <u>mary.lusk@ufl.edu</u>.

New AAEA theme of articles "COVID-19 and the Agriculture Industry: Labor, Supply Chains, and Consumer Behavior," written in collaboration with many of our UF colleagues (including Derek, Gulcan, Tara, Lurleen and Skyler) and colleagues from other institutions, now appears promoted in the following press:

# COVID-19 and the Agriculture Industry: Labor, Supply Chains, and Consumer Behavior



Vegetable Growers News, Fat Pitch Financials, Fruit Growers News, SF Gate, Chron, 21 WFMJ, WBOC, WICZ, Seed Daily, State of Digital Publishing, Axcess News, Magazines Today, International Association of Business Communicators, Gateway News Source, One News Page, Invest USA, Business Class News, Next Wave Group, Daily Times Leader, Fox 21 Delmarva, The Inyo Register, The Saline Courier, KTVN, The Post & Mail, Antlers American, Winslow, Evans, & Crocker Inc., Benzinga, The Punxsutawney Spirit, Starkville Daily News, Decatur Daily Democrat, Borger News-Herald, Morning News, The Ridgway Record, The Observer News Enterprise, The Kane Republican, Chronicle Journal, My Mother Lode, The Pilot News, The Community Post, Sweetwater Reporter.

The articles in this theme discuss the many ways in which COVID-19 has affected the U.S. agriculture industry. In particular, the articles explore the demand and supply-side effects on domestic and immigrant agricultural labor, disruptions in agricultural supply chains, and short and long-term changes in consumer food purchasing behavior.

Articles in this Theme:

- <u>COVID-19: Effects on U.S. Labor, Supply Chains and Consumption Imagery Article</u> *Luis Peña-Lévano, Shaheer Burney, Grace Melo, and Cesar Escalante*
- Labor Disruptions Caused by COVID-19 in the U.S. Agriculture and Nonfarm Industries Luis Peña-Lévano, Shaheer Burney, and Colton Adams
- U.S. COVID-19 Policy Affecting Agricultural Labor Derek Farnsworth
- <u>COVID-19 Risk Factors Vary by Legal Status among Florida Crop Workers</u> *Gulcan Onel, Skyler Simnitt, Jeanne-Marie Stacciarini, and Antonio Tovar-Aguilar*
- <u>The Availability of H-2A Guest Farm Workers during the COVID-19 Pandemic</u> Cesar L. Escalante, Tianyuan Luo, and Carmina E. Taylor

- Food and Agricultural Transportation Challenges Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic Lurleen Walters, Tara Wade, and Shellye Suttles
- <u>The Path Forward: U.S. Consumer and Food Retail Responses to COVID-19</u> *Grace Melo*

Submitted by Luis Moisés Peña-Lévano, PhD, Agricultural and Applied Economics Association – TLC Treasurer / Secretary 2020-2021, Faculty, Food & Resource Economics Department, UF/IFAS Gulf Coast Research and Education Center

## **Recent Publications**

Understanding Extension #2: Utilizing Extension Services in School-Based Agricultural Education. Debra Barry, John Diaz, Alyssa Shepherd, Jennifer Patton, and Stephen Gran UF/IFAS EDIS Publication AEC704 (https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu)

Morphological, cytological and molecular marker analyses of 'Tapestry' caladium variants reveal diverse genetic changes and enable association of leaf coloration pattern loci with molecular markers. Z. Cao and Z. Deng. 2020. Plant Cell, Tissue and Organ Culture. DOI 10.1007/s11240-020-01922-2

Sources and concentrations of nutrients in surface runoff from waterfront homes with different landscape practices. Krimsky, Lisa S., Mary G. Lusk, Holly Abeels, and Linda Seals. Science of the Total Environment (2020): 142320.

Wastewater and Septic System Management for the COVID-19 Virus: Frequently Asked Questions https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/SS/SS69200.pdf

Landscaping on or near Septic Drain Fields. https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/SS/SS68700.pdf