

# News



Spring - 2009



## “Gulf Growers” Launch Assault on Psyllid & HLB

Florida’s citrus growers have recently unified their efforts on many fronts to fight their toughest fight ever against the bacterial disease called huanglongbing (HLB) or “citrus greening.” Greening kills trees and off-flavors fruit. And, many leaders warn...that unless growers get “greening” in check...Florida’s citrus industry, as we know it today...could be history! HLB threatens the very economic viability of the industry.

Realizing the situation’s severity, Florida’s citrus industry leaders have brought together growers and scientists from throughout the world to rapidly focus their efforts to find and fund both “short” and “long” term solutions for “greening.”

Numerous seminars have been held with world-renowned research scientists. Grower workshops have helped to communicate protocols to “immediately” deal with the disease. And, Florida’s citrus growers have targeted millions of dollars of their own money on funding research.

While being engaged throughout this reconnaissance on HLB, industry leaders from the “Gulf” region are working to find ways to fight “greening” as quickly as possible, and which could be implemented in the

region’s vast but contiguous groves.

Through the Gulf Citrus Growers Association’s, Production and Research Committee, an extensive and cooperative effort to thwart the movement of the Asian Citrus Psyllid, the insect that vectors the disease, was launched this past winter. Mark Colbert, committee chairman, noted that during the past few years, the industry began investing millions of dollars into research which can provide long-term solutions. “However, the industry needs strategies right NOW to keep existing groves healthy and productive,” said Colbert. “One of the most effective practices that leading entomologists recommended, after studying the spread of HLB, is the use of dormant sprays to control the psyllid. So, we brought together the scientists, regulators, aerial applicators and citrus growers to develop and implement a ‘citrus psyllid suppression plan’ for the ‘Gulf’ region,” Colbert added. “Our goal was to conduct a timely, coordinated and comprehensive region-wide spray program for our five counties to significantly reduce the psyllid populations,” he explained.

Working with and through Dr. Phil Stansly, UF/IFAS  
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# President's Message

At the "Gulf Citrus" 23rd annual meeting on June 3rd, I will have completed my 4th consecutive term as GCGA President. It truly has been an honor for me to serve the citrus growers of this region in this leadership position, especially when I review the names of those who held this high office before me.

First, I would like to thank the "citrus grower" leaders of the past and present for their encouragement, cooperation and support during my tenure. Our association has been blessed with competent and dedicated leaders many of whom are still participating today. It is my hope that this continues in the years ahead. I certainly plan to continue to be actively involved and engaged in GCGA even though I am completing my final term as president.

I would also like to thank Ron and the staff for their professionalism and support during my stint. In "Gulf Citrus," the officers and board make the policies...and the staff works to implement them. We are fortunate to have such dedicated individuals working with and for us. And, I would be remiss for not adding that our staff also brings an element of "creativity" and "enthusiasm" to our GCGA programs and activities.

Finally, I would like to thank the citrus grower and associate members of this association. Without your interest and support, there would not be an effective voice for our industry in this very important "citrus" and "agricultural" region of the state.

As a "regional" association representing the five counties here in SW Florida, the Gulf Citrus Growers Association has worked diligently to establish a "credible" voice for citrus growers and "agriculture." A "credible voice" is not created overnight. In today's court of public opinion, such an achievement must be built one step at a time! Our message is heard and respected in each of our five counties and within many different circles.



**David Wheeler**

GCGA has a place at the table with elected and appointed officials at all levels of government. The association has built good working relationships with other agricultural and business organizations. And, "Gulf Citrus" has gained the respect of the regional and state agencies that deal with water management and land use issues, the ones that can make or break the future of citrus production and/or agriculture here in Southwest Florida. It has been said by a former GCGA president, "If there is an issue impacting area citrus growers...GCGA is at the table and/or on the phone."

During my four years as your president, GCGA has been actively engaged in the citrus canker and greening issues, the water and land use issues, the taxation issues, and the list goes on and on!

It is my sincere hope and my futuristic "challenge" to this association's members and leaders...that we work harder than ever before to sustain "Gulf Citrus" as our region's citrus grower organization for many more years to come! It has taken our dedicated leaders over 20 years to establish our "credible" voice on behalf of citrus growers and agriculture here in the region. We must do all we can to provide the leadership and financial support necessary to continue to keep our organization active and effective! I realize that we are facing one of the worst financial situations at levels from "global" to "grove," but we must find creative...yet effective ways to support GCGA! Our long range planning committee is in the process of strategic planning to accomplish this goal. Please do "your" part to make this effort successful! YOUR association needs YOUR continued support as we plan for our future. Thanks again for electing me your president, and for providing me with this tremendous opportunity to serve this region's citrus growers.

## Simmons Appointed to New Citrus Research and Development (DSO)

Wayne Simmons, a member of the Gulf Citrus Growers Association's board of directors, was recently appointed by Florida Citrus Mutual to serve on the newly formed Citrus Research and Development Foundation, Inc. (CRDF). The foundation is a not-for-profit arm of the University of Florida, called a university direct-support organization (DSO). It was established to manage research projects to yield solutions to greening and other citrus diseases which are severely crippling the industry. The CRDF is the culmination of efforts begun in early 2008 by concerned grower leaders and the Florida Citrus Commission to adequately fund citrus research, enlist the best scientific minds and resources, and

assure accountability in the process.

Simmons, a sixth-generation Floridian, has been involved in the citrus industry for nearly 30 years. He will represent "Gulf Citrus" on the new DSO. The University of Florida graduate served as president of the Florida Citrus Production Managers' Association and the UF/IFAS' Southwest Florida Research and Education Center's citrus foundation.

"I am committed to preserving the Florida citrus industry through its research efforts to find solutions to the greening disease and other threatening diseases," said Simmons. He joins 11 other citrus leaders on the new CRDF board including GCGA member Jerry Newlin of Orangeco of Florida.

### Gulf Citrus Growers Association 2008-2009 Board of Directors

**David Wheeler**, President  
**Carey Soud**, Vice President  
**Wade Timpner**, Secretary  
**Callie Walker**, Treasurer

**Don Barwick**  
**Mark Colbert**  
**Emmett Evans, III**  
**Joe Hilliard, II**  
**John Hoffman**  
**Paul Meador**  
**Mike Murphy**  
**Wayne Simmons**

**Steve Smith**  
**Ron Hamel**

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#### Publisher's Statement

**Gulf Citrus Growers' News** is published biannually by the Gulf Citrus Growers Association, Post Office Box 1319, LaBelle, Florida 33975, (863) 675-2180. Postmaster, please send address change to the address above. **Editor: Ron Hamel**

# Association Schedules Elections for 2009-10 Directors



**2008-2009 Gulf Citrus Growers Association Board of Directors**

(Left to Right) Mike Murphy, Mark Colbert, Ron Hamel, Emmett Evans III, Joe Hilliard II, Paul Meador, Wade Timpner, Callie Walker, Don Barwick, David Wheeler, Steve Smith, Wayne Simmons, Carey Soud and John Hoffman.

County elections for citrus grower representatives to serve on the 2009-2010 Gulf Citrus Growers Association's Board of Directors have been scheduled for May 21st and 22nd.

Wade Timpner, GCGA Secretary and chairman of the association's nominating committee, would like to remind voting grower members that each of the five counties will elect at least one director at their respective "county" annual meetings according to the by-laws.

Based on the association's current "grower" membership, Charlotte, Glades and Lee counties will each elect one director. Collier will elect three (3), and Hendry five (5) directors. Members will receive detailed voting instructions prior to the meetings.

The dates, times and locations of each "County" annual meeting are listed below. Ballots for the two "At-Large" directors will be sent out with the voting details and these directors will be formally elected at the "Gulf Citrus" annual meeting on June 3rd in LaBelle.

## Directors' Elections

### Thursday, May 21st

**Charlotte County** (One director)  
8:30 a.m. Charlotte Commission Chambers  
Port Charlotte

**Hendry County** (Five directors)  
2:00 p.m. Gulf Citrus Offices; LaBelle

### Friday, May 22nd

**Glades County** (One director)  
9:00 a.m. Gulf Citrus Offices; LaBelle

**Lee County** (One director)  
9:15 a.m. Gulf Citrus Offices; LaBelle

**Collier County** (Three directors)  
11:30 a.m. Barron Collier Office; Immokalee

### Wednesday, June 3rd

**Annual Meeting** (Two at-large)  
10:30 a.m. Townsend AG Center; LaBelle



## GCGA 2008-2009 Board of Directors & Counties of Representation

### Charlotte County

Emmett Evans, III  
Evans Properties, Inc.

### Collier County

John Hoffman  
Barron Collier Partnership  
Paul Meador  
Gulf Citrus Partners LP  
Mike Murphy  
Cooperative Producers, Inc.

### Glades County

David Wheeler  
Wheeler Farms, Inc.

### Hendry County

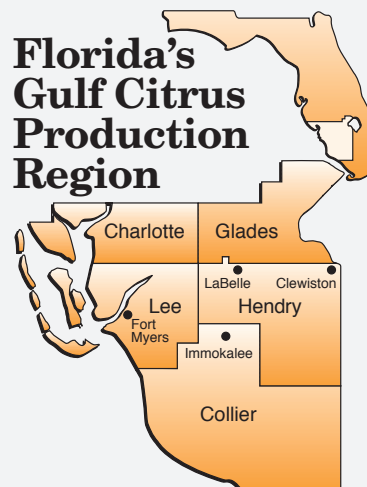
Mark Colbert  
Duda Farm Fresh Foods  
Joe Hilliard, II  
Hilliard Brothers, Inc.  
Wayne Simmons  
LaBelle Fruit Co. LLC  
Steve Smith  
Alico, Inc.  
Carey Soud  
Soud Family Partnership

### Lee County

Wade Timpner  
George Austin, Inc.

### At-Large Seats

Don Barwick  
Heller Brothers Packing  
Corp.  
Callie Walker  
English Brothers



Instructions on the elections will be sent to each registered voting member with ample time to complete the voter registration documents and participate. Please contact Ron Hamel, GCGA executive vice president if you have any questions regarding the process to elect county and "At-Large" directors to the association's board.

# 9th Annual Gulf Citrus “Country Gala” Breaks Record



## 2009 “Country Gala”

**Top Left:** Great “turnout” for this year’s festivities!

**Top Middle:** State Senator Dave Aronberg pledges his support for Florida’s citrus growers.

**Top Right:** Raymond and Donnie Crawford of the Hendry County Cattlemen’s Assn. cookin’ the best steaks around!

**Second Left:** Gala auctioneer Jack Burges and “assistant” Stefanie Cutshall announce bucket raffle winners.

**Second Right:** Sonya Carns of Ag-Tronix showcases unique citrus-themed serving pieces during the live auction.

**Third Left:** The Gala “refreshment stand” was a real hit throughout the evening!

**Third Right:** Larry Marsh “displays” his prize...a “Gator” football autographed by Coach Urban Meyer, Tim Tebow and Percy Harvin! Go Gators!

**Bottom Left:** Peggy Hampton prepared the tasty compliments to the tantalizing steaks!

**Bottom Right:** Bryson Crawford demonstrates the John Deere mini-tractor during the Auction. There were great items for young and old at the Gala!

A high-rollin’ crowd of 300 “city” and “country” folks were “rounded-up” for the Gulf Citrus Growers Association’s annual “Country Gala” evening at the LaBelle Civic Center. The event, which serves to support the association’s community outreach and governmental affairs programs, was held on April 4th, and was hailed as one of the most successful “Gala’s” that GCGA has hosted.

From the financial support of 74 “sponsors”...including 12 “Platinum,” 31 “Gold” and 31 “Silver”...to the 50-plus auction and raffle contributors, the 9th Annual “Country Gala” broke the record for the total number of supporters for the event. “The GCGA leadership was concerned about the impact of the current economic downturn on the ‘Gala,’” said

Ron Hamel, executive vice president of the association. “But we were pleasantly surprised that very generous folks participated in the raffles and auctions which are a fun part of the evening’s entertainment,” he added. “We did offer an ‘interesting’ and ‘valuable’ array of ‘goodies’ for our raffle and auctions this year,” he said. “But, Jack Burges, our ‘official’ auctioneer for the ‘Gala,’ did an excellent job of ‘challenging’ the bidders to the benefit of the association,” Hamel recalled. “Some of our items went for ‘extra special’ prices. We really thank all those who actively participated this year, as this financial success will enable GCGA to continue to provide support for many county and regional groups and events in Southwest Florida,” he noted.

Once again, the Hendry County Cattlemen’s Association provided and cooked their famous perfectly-seasoned steaks, and their efforts prompted rave reviews! In fact, some extras even provided additional excitement for the live auction! “The Gulf Citrus Growers Association would like to thank Greg Jones, HCCA President, and his ‘herd’ of cattlemen chefs...for their cookin’,” said David Wheeler, GCGA President. “We are very proud that the Hendry County Cattlemen’s Association supports our event with their time and talent.”

The GCGA board and staff sincerely thank all the volunteers that worked to make the 9th Annual “Country Gala” so successful! Ya’ll come back next year... ya heeah!

# Thanks

to our  
Country Gala  
Sponsors!



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Hayloft Western Wear, Kelly Palmer ♦ Heller Brothers ♦ Hendry County Cattlemen's Association  
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Veranda Restaurant ♦ Verandah Country Club ♦ Wade Timpner ♦ Wheeler Farms



# GCGA Schedules 23rd Annual Meeting in LaBelle



The Gulf Citrus Growers Association's board of directors is pleased to announce that the twenty-third annual meeting of the organization is scheduled for Wednesday, June 3, 2009, at the Dallas B. Townsend Agricultural Center in LaBelle. The meeting will begin at 10:30 a.m. with a business session with the annual luncheon to follow.

The annual meeting will feature reports and updates on several of the key issues facing the association and its grower members. Two "at-large" grower directors will be elected to serve for the 2009-2010 year. And following the "at-large" election, the 2009-2010 board and officers will be "officially seated."

The program will also include recogni-

tion of those key individuals and organizations that have supported GCGA.

**The association is pleased to announce that Fred G. Gmitter, Ph.D., Professor of Citrus Genetics and Breeding, UF/IFAS' Citrus Research and Education Center, Lake Alfred, will deliver "an optimistic message" regarding the future of the industry.**

The Gulf Citrus Grower Association's Scholarship Foundation will also hold its annual meeting in conjunction with the GCGA session. Reports from the foundation's officers will be presented to the members of both organizations.

GCGA members will be receiving an invitation letter to attend the 23rd annual meeting, along with the RSVP card for the luncheon. Although there is no charge for the meal, members are encouraged to "register" to attend the meeting. Please return the "card" or call the office at (863) 675-2180 to register.

## August 19th and 20th Dates for 2009 Citrus Expo<sup>SM</sup> in Ft. Myers

Despite Tropical Storm Faye's "blow-out" of last year's event, the 2009 Citrus Expo<sup>SM</sup> is slated for August 19th and 20th at the Lee Civic Center in Ft. Myers. Gary Cooper, owner of Southeast AgNet, *Citrus Industry Magazine*, and the Citrus Expo<sup>SM</sup>, recently reported that even with the threat of Florida's hurricane season... the August period remains the time preferred by "grassroots" growers. "The kids are back in school, vacations are over and growers want to visit with neighbors and industry vendors before harvest season gets into full swing," said Cooper after polling the citrus growers. "So we are sticking with it, and planning to host an event that growers anywhere won't want to miss," he added. "We plan to be back in full form in 2009 to provide the most extensive and timely two-day seminar and trade show event in the citrus industry," said Cooper although he noted that the event suffered financially due to its forced cancellation in 2008.

The seminar planning process is now underway and Cooper is encouraging citrus growers and organizations to send ideas for seminar topics directly to him at [www.CitrusExpo.net](http://www.CitrusExpo.net)!

The Gulf Citrus Growers Association, Highlands County Citrus Growers Association and the Peace River Valley Citrus Growers Association are engaged in the event's planning and promotion efforts,



### Florida Congressman Rooney to Address "Gulf" Citrus Banquet!

GGCA is proud to announce that Congressman Tom Rooney will be "keynote speaker" for this year's banquet. The "freshman" member of Congress represents Florida's 16th District.

along with the University of Florida's Institute for Agricultural Sciences.

As of the *Florida Gulf Citrus News* deadline, over 75% of the trade show space has been sold out, so interested potential vendors and exhibitors are encouraged to reserve their booth space soon. The trade show is once again expected to be a total "sell out."

"Once again growers can expect a tasty continental breakfast and quality lunch both days, and other 'special events' will be conducted within the trade show hall along with the 'door prize'

drawings," added Cooper.

Interested growers and vendors are encouraged to monitor [www.CitrusExpo.net](http://www.CitrusExpo.net), the "official" communication site, for current information on the event.

The Gulf Citrus Growers Association will host its "Annual Citrus Industry Banquet" the evening of August 19th at the Harborside Event Center in downtown Ft. Myers. Invitations will be sent out in July and reservations can also be made directly through the GCGA offices at (863) 675-2180. Please put the 2009 Citrus Expo activities on your calendar.

# “Gulf Growers” Launch Assault on Psyllid & HLB

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Southwest Florida Research and Education Center (SWFREC) entomologist; and Paul Mears, Florida Department of Agriculture, Division of Plant Industry, “Gulf” growers and applicators mapped out the citrus acreage within each county. Stansly and Mears also conducted pre-spray surveys to determine psyllid populations and to serve as baseline measures for monitoring the effort.

“A dormant spray is a foliar application of broad-spectrum insecticide directed at over-wintering adult psyllids. The dormant spray attacks the psyllid at its weakest point and when beneficial insects are least exposed,” said Dr. Stansly. “The effect of dormant sprays is multiplied by area-wide application,” he explained. Colbert added that the psyllid is winged and travels from grove to grove and over long distances, so it is important for growers to spray during the same period to minimize insect movement.

Colbert also noted that aerial applications covering large acreages in a short timeframe adds to the success of the effort. However, he said, “Whether growers spray by ground or by air, a coordinated effort has the potential to significantly slow down the insect and the spread of the disease. At this time, this approach is the best way to get the ‘most bang for your buck’ when dealing with the psyllid.”

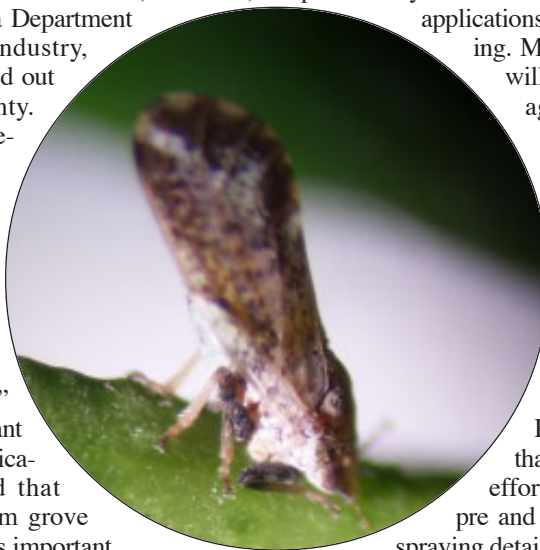
The “Gulf Citrus” coordinated spraying initiative covered over 80,000 acres in the region. Over 77,000 acres were sprayed by air. Dr. Mongi Zekri, UF/IFAS’ multi-county citrus agent, recently reported

preliminary results of an 88% reduction of psyllids by aerial applications and a 71% reduction by ground spraying. Monitoring groves for psyllid populations will continue, as part of the “vector” management plan. This effort will help to determine when and if additional spraying is recommended by the scientists.

“The GCGA psyllid control program is evidence of how working cooperatively and sharing resources can result in area-wide insect suppression and promote the kind of team efforts that will benefit Florida’s citrus industry for the long term,” said Richard Gaskalla, DPI’s Division Director.

Paul Mears, DPI regional director, added that all parties played important roles in the effort from the strategic logistics including pre and post spray counts, grove identification, spraying details and communications.

“This effort was initiated through the efforts of many individuals,” said Ron Hamel, GCGA executive vice president. They include the aerial applicators: Steve Fletcher and Jeff Summersill. The “section team” captains: Jim Snively, Joe Hilliard, II, Danny Sutton, Kevin Rayburn, Mark Colbert, Jim Cloughley, Wes Mathis, Dr. Mongi Zekri, Tom Kirschner, Paul Meador and Fred Walters. The UF/IFAS Southwest Florida Research & Education Center “Greening Team”: Dr. Phil Stansly, Dr. Bob Ebel, Dr. Bob Rouse, Dr. Pam Roberts, Dr. Fritz Roka and Dr. Kelly Morgan. The Florida Department of Agriculture, DPI team: Paul Mears, Rusty Noah and Jim Heidegger.



## UF/IFAS’ “Immokalee Center” HLB Lab Passes 11,000 Samples!

Since it began operating in February 2008, the huanglongbing or HLB Laboratory at the UF/IFAS Southwest Florida Research and Education Center (SWFREC) in Immokalee has processed over 11,000 citrus samples. These samples are processed to identify and confirm that the citrus tree from which the sample came has the “greening” disease.

Lab manager Paul Julian oversees several employees who help prepare samples for diagnosis. Once DNA extractions are conducted, the samples are analyzed in a Real Time Polymerase



Lab manager Paul Julian  
(Photo courtesy of UF/IFAS’ Julie Carson)

Chain Reaction (PCR) molecular diagnosis machine.

This facility is critical to identifying HLB in citrus groves in the region and throughout the state. It was established through the efforts of the Gulf Citrus Growers Association and elected officials including Senator J.D. Alexander, Representative Denise Grimsley and Representative Paige Kreegel.

For more information about how to submit citrus samples to the Lab free of charge, please visit the SWFREC website at: <http://swfrec.ifas.ufl.edu/hlb/>.

## Austin Inducted into Florida Citrus Hall of Fame

GCGA past-president George H. Austin was inducted into the Florida Citrus Hall of Fame on March 6, 2009 at ceremonies held at Florida Southern College in Lakeland. Austin was recognized for his dedicated service to citrus growers, his pioneering efforts in the formation and leadership of the Gulf Citrus Growers Association and further for his promotion of Florida's citrus industry to many audiences.

His service to the industry also included leadership in the successful industry effort to protect the citrus tariff on imported orange juice.

Ben Hill Griffin, III, a member of "Gulf Citrus" was also inducted during the March 6th ceremonies. He was recognized for his leadership in many organizations as a grower, a packer and a processor representative.

GCGA congratulates these outstanding leaders and their families who supported these men in their industry endeavors.



**GCGA Congratulates Three Citrus Hall of Famers!**  
 George Austin (left) and Ben Hill Griffin, III (right) are "welcomed" into the Florida Citrus Hall of Fame by Hugh English (center) following their induction ceremony at Florida Southern College. Mr. English was previously inducted into both the Florida Agricultural and Citrus Halls.

## Association Leaders Meet with Tom Rooney



**Congressman Rooney (far right, front) Discusses Federal Issues with GCGA!**

The Gulf Citrus Growers Association's Board of Directors and Governmental Relations Committee recently met with Florida Congressman Tom Rooney at Hilliard Brothers of Florida. The GCGA and Florida Citrus Mutual leaders discussed the issues dealing with citrus greening, immigration/labor relations, taxation, species habitat (focused on the panther) and water management (primarily the importance of Lake Okeechobee as a source

of irrigation for citrus and other crops).

Congressman Rooney assured the leaders that although his current Congressional Committee assignments are Armed Services and Judiciary...he is committed to addressing agricultural issues since his "District 16" is Florida's largest AG region.

The session was the first of ongoing "roundtable" discussions that Rooney plans to schedule with the agricultural leaders in his district.

**Gulf Citrus appreciates the support of**



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## GCGA Promotes Rashford

Bernadette "Bernie" Rashford was recently promoted to the position of Director, Administrative and Membership Services for the Gulf Citrus Growers Association. She replaced Joanne Stein who retired from GCGA last March.

In her new "fulltime" position with "Gulf Citrus," Bernie will be handling office management and bookkeeping, supporting special events and updating the website.