



Quarterly FSHS Newsletter

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From the President's Desk

By Manjul Dutt, FSHS President

Dear Colleagues,

What a wonderful year this has been so far! Our recent FSHS meeting in beautiful Bonita Springs had record attendance, and I hope you had a fantastic opportunity to network and relax at the Hyatt Regency.



I grew up in a little town in the eastern Himalayas, a place bursting with amazing plants and animals. The rolling hills, vibrant greenery, sparkling waterfalls,

and a pleasantly cool climate - never exceeding 80°F - earned this area the nickname "Scotland of the East." I had the chance to visit Scotland many years later, and you know what? I could see the similarities!

I completed my M.S. at the University of Kentucky under the guidance of Dr. Robert Geneve. My subsequent Ph.D. at UF focused on grape improvement. Since then, I have concentrated on improving citrus, initially as a postdoctoral

associate and later as an assistant research scientist. I am currently an assistant professor of horticulture focused on citrus improvement and dabble with other subtropical fruits such as avocados and grapes! In 2019, I was elected as a fellow of the Indian Academy of Horticultural Sciences (IAHS). In 2025, I received the Early Career Excellence Award from the ASHS Plant Biotechnology Professional Interest Group!

The primary focus of my program is to utilize both conventional breeding and biotechnological tools to develop improved citrus that can withstand HLB (citrus greening or Huanglongbing) disease. Sadly, this disease has become endemic in Florida, and only HLB-tolerant varieties can provide a lasting solution.



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We have focused on building resilience from within by modifying the Systemic Acquired Resistance (SAR) pathways in citrus through genome editing or genetic engineering. Conventional breeding efforts have been focused on harnessing the natural resistance to HLB found in wild citrus species and some relatives. Fun fact: one of the citrus species I work with that is resistant to HLB, *Citrus latipes*, is native to the region where I grew up!

This approach helps us develop better citrus cultivars that thrive and stay healthy! I have recently released a couple of HLB-tolerant finger lime citrus cultivars. These unique fruits are becoming a secret weapon in cocktails, seafood dishes, and desserts. We have developed a website where folks can obtain additional information on the finger limes (<https://australian-limes.ifas.ufl.edu>). Scientifically, they hold significant potential for studying how the *Candidatus Liberibacter asiaticus* (CaLas), the bacterium responsible for HLB, behaves within an HLB-tolerant tree.



I have been grateful to be a continuous member of FSHS since my graduate school days at the University of Florida. My first presentation at the FSHS was on grape improvement over a decade ago, but my first official role in FSHS was as the Vice President of the Citrus section during 2021-2022.

On behalf of the whole FSHS board, I welcome you to our next annual meeting. I'm excited to meet all of you in Jacksonville next June. Let's work together to make the 2026 FSHS meeting a fantastic success!



- Manjul Dutt

Abstract Submission for the 2026 Annual Meeting begins January 15th

The 139th FSHS annual meeting will receive abstract submissions, starting January 15th. The society offers the opportunity to present your research and extension accomplishments in seven sections:

- Agritourism
- Agroecology & Natural Resources
- Citrus
- Handling & Processing
- Krome Memorial Institute
- Ornamental, Garden & Landscape
- Vegetables

The society will receive titles for oral and poster presentations. This year the annual meeting will take place at the Hyatt Regency Riverfront Hotel in downtown Jacksonville! Enjoy walkable downtown access and panoramic views of the St. Johns River [Hyatt Regency | Jacksonville Riverfront](#)



138th Annual Meeting of FSHS

2025 Award Winners



2025 Scholarship Recipients



Florida Postharvest Horticulture Tour

March 16 to 20, 2026

The Florida Postharvest Horticulture Tour offers a rare opportunity to explore the full spectrum of postharvest handling — from field to distribution. Participants gain firsthand insights into the technologies and logistics that drive quality and efficiency in fresh produce systems. Hosted by UF/IFAS specialists Dr. Steven Sargent and Dr. Mark Ritenour, the tour features visits to diverse facilities, including fresh-cut processors, supermarket distribution centers, port terminals, and packing operations. Designed for professionals involved in harvesting, packing, transportation, and import/export, the program provides a comprehensive overview of postharvest handling systems. A discount is available for University of Florida and non-UF faculty members.



To register or learn more, contact [Adrian Berry](mailto:adberry@ufl.edu) adberry@ufl.edu



LOOKING AHEAD.....



June 7 - 9, 2026



Hyatt Regency
Jacksonville Riverfront

The 139th Florida State Horticultural Society
Annual Meeting - we hope to see you there!

Abstract submissions begin January 15
(no title submission period)



fshs.org





UF/IFAS Sunsets Department of Environmental Horticulture — what happens next?

By: Scott Angle, Ph.D.

Senior Vice President, UF/IFAS

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UF/IFAS is sunsetting its [Department of Environmental Horticulture](#). What's important to know is what's NOT happening.

No programs get cut, including the many that are focused on the green industry. No one gets laid off. No one stops preparing students for future careers in the industry. No one stops work on projects funded by the FNGLA [Endowed Research Fund](#).

In fact, no one's phone number, email address or office location even changes. You'll call or email the same people you've always communicated with, including our newest hires serving the industry, Dr. Jeb Fields (nursery crop management), Dr. Yuyao Kong (controlled environment production) and Dr. Uttara Samarkoon (controlled environment agriculture).

It is not a mission change or a budget cut.

The faculty and staff you know and trust will continue to focus on your needs. You'll call the same people you've always called when you need help. The only thing that will change is each faculty member's academic home.

This administrative evolution will better serve the interests of FNGLA in key ways.

Fostering collaboration. Your solutions have never come just from one department. Scientists from [Horticultural Sciences](#), [Plant Pathology](#), [Agronomy](#) and the [School of Forest, Fisheries, & Geomatics Sciences](#) (SFFGS) have long worked on green industry challenges.

Now, your faculty partners will choose other departments as their academic home. It essentially embeds them with teams whose expertise aligns with theirs. One could argue for example, that an Environmental Horticulture faculty member who works on trees will find different opportunities to collaborate with other tree ex-

perts in SFFGS than he or she would have in their present department, where most colleagues focus on flowerers, landscape or nursery plants.

Enhancing support. The change has the potential to increase the capacity of horticulture faculty with better structure and support to connect with colleagues across multiple disciplines. For example, someone who "moves" (and brings all foundation funding and students with them) to Horticultural Sciences has more than 50 new department colleagues who can help them solve horticultural plant and production problems.

Migrating staff will also fold into new departments to scale their efforts in support of faculty so the experts can spend less time on back-office functions and more on [teaching](#), research and [Extension](#).

Finding funding paths. Joining a team in other departments may connect the faculty to many more funding opportunities than those that are focused exclusively on ornamentals.

Attracting more students. Distributing environmental horticulture classes throughout the course catalog of another department may offer a gateway for students who may not otherwise have found them, potentially sparking more passion for the industry.

We will be able to share new department homes for faculty in early 2026. Wherever they land, they'll have the same focus on providing the science that supports a green Florida.

[J.Scott Angle](#) is the University of Florida's Senior Vice President for Agriculture and Natural Resources and leader of the UF Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS).





Incentive Program for Members

It's never too early to approach a new sponsor for our annual meeting!

FSHS Annual Sponsorship Categories & Member Incentive

Bronze:	\$250	-	\$25 credit toward registration or member dues
Silver:	\$500	-	\$50 credit toward registration or member dues
Gold:	\$1000	-	\$100 credit toward registration or member dues
Platinum:	\$2000	-	\$200 credit toward registration or member dues
Diamond:	\$5000	-	\$500 credit toward registration or member dues



For more information, contact: Gene McAvoy, Sponsorship Chair gmcavoy@ufl.edu

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