January 16, 2003

Unseasonably cold weather continues to affect South Florida production areas. The coldest weather of the season to date moved in behind a strong cold front on January 7th bringing patchy frost to some of the normally colder areas of Southwest Florida. Fortunately temperatures did not dip as low as had been predicted due to an easterly flow off the Gulf and no significant crop damage occurred. Nighttime lows have ranged in the 30s, 40s and 50s for the period with daytime highs mainly in the 60s and low 70’s.

Precipitation for the period has been minimal with total accumulations of around a half-inch in some east coast production areas and only trace amounts elsewhere. Generally drier conditions have helped reduce disease pressure and enable growers to gain some ground in their disease control efforts.

In general, cool, wet conditions over the past 6 weeks have slowed plant growth and fruit maturation, with some negative impact on yield and quality. Cold windy conditions have beat up some sensitive crops like beans, cucumbers and squash, which were left uncovered.

Vegetables coming to market include beans, cabbage, celery, cilantro, cucumbers, eggplants, endive, escarole, lettuce, parsley, peppers, radishes, squash, strawberries, sweet corn, tomatoes and specialty crops. Quality is mostly good although higher than normal grade-out due to weather and disease is still causing some problems.

FAWN Weather Summary

<table>
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Air Temp (°F)</th>
<th>Rainfall (Inches)</th>
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The short term forecast from the National Weather Service in Miami indicates that calls a strong cold front will move through South Florida on Friday ahead of an arctic high pressure system moving south out of Canada. The result for South Florida is likely to be the coldest temperatures so far this winter season. As the high-pressure system moves southeast into the Gulf of Mexico on Sunday, wind speeds should slowly decrease. This will set up a good situation for strong radiational cooling Saturday night and Sunday morning. If the wind does diminish completely and the skies remain clear...temperatures Sunday morning could drop to near 30 over the interior areas mainly along and north of Alligator Alley and away from Lake Okeechobee. This would include the Immokalee, Moore Haven, LaBelle, Palmdale, Clewiston and Belle Glade areas away from the lake. Temperatures in the mid to upper 30s could extend as far south as the Tamiami Trail with temperatures near 40 in the Redlands areas of Miami-Dade County and 40 to 45 in the metro southeast coast areas.

As with any South Florida freeze situation, much depends on exactly where the center of the high pressure system moves, whether or not the wind goes calm, and whether or not the sky remains clear. At present there appears to be a chance of frost on Saturday morning and an even better chance on Sunday morning in normally colder areas.

Growers are advised to stay tuned to NOAA weather radio or other media for updates on this potential freeze situation. Additional information and detailed graphics can be found on the National Weather Service Miami web site at http://www.srh.noaa.gov/mia.

Insects

Reports indicate that insect pressure remains fairly low in most areas.

Leafminers

Reports out of Homestead indicate that sweet potatoes producers are experiencing problems with the morning glory leafminer. This can be a real problem since a number of related weeds are quite prevalent in the area.

Scouts in Palm Beach report that leafminer pressure remains low although there have been reports of “hot spots” in young fields adjacent to older fields were control programs have diminished.

Around southwest Florida, leafminer pressure appears to have slowed with cooler temperatures and populations have been mostly low with few exceptions mainly in younger plantings. Scouts indicate that parasites are keeping leafminer numbers below threshold in several locations.

Whiteflies

Around southwest Florida, whiteflies pressure varies greatly between locations and most areas with high pressure can be related to crop destruction in adjacent fields. Scouts report that the destruction of old tomato fields and other crops is resulting in the migration of whiteflies.

Respondents from Palm Beach note that whitfly pressure is low but consistent in most places. Some growers have observed that pressure drops off with falling temperatures but bounces back on warm days.

Scouts in Homestead report sporadic whitfly pressure with a gradual buildup being noted in fields that are being harvested.

Due to favorable prices, some growers are holding tomatoes for a third pick. Growers are advised to monitor whitefly populations and maintain control of in-field population preferably with IGR’s such as Courier and Knack, and promptly destroy old fields after harvest in order to reduce carryover to the next crop.
Remember that a break between crops is an important tool in managing whitefly populations in spring plantings. Whenever possible susceptible crops should be separated as much as a possible by time and distance.

I have heard of more than one story of old fields where TYLCV is running down the rows in the tops of the plants in close proximity to young plantings. This is scary! Growing crops is difficult enough without setting the stage for self-inflicted injury.

**Aphids**

Growers and scouts around Homestead report that aphids are widely present on several crops including cucurbits, tomato, potato, and strawberry.

Respondents in Palm Beach indicate aphid pressure is increasing with more winged aphids being seen on beans, cucurbits, peppers, tomatoes and specialty crops. Some limited colony formation has been noted.

Around southwest Florida, winged aphids are being reported across a variety of crops but colony formation remains low. In some places, where growers have left row covers in place for extended periods aphid populations have built up under the covers warranting control measures.

**Worms**

Respondents in southwest Florida report worm pressure remains low with low levels of southern armyworms showing up occasionally.

Around Palm Beach County, growers and scouts indicate that worm pressure has been light.

Reports from Homestead indicate that worms have been sporadic with the main concern being fall armyworm in corn.

**Pepper Weevil**

Respondents from Homestead report that pepper weevils are well established and pressure remains constant.

Around southwest Florida, reports indicate that pepper weevil pressure remains low with a few weevils being found in traps and older pepper fields.

On the east coast, growers and scouts indicate that pepper weevil pressure is mostly low but continue to report scattered hotspots particularly where new plantings are close to older plantings.

**Thrips**

Melon thrips (*Thrips palmi*) are widely present in Homestead and continue to be a problem on beans, eggplant, pepper, and potato.

Growers and scouts in Palm Beach continue to note the occasional appearance of symptoms consistent with *Thrips palmi* on pepper foliage. Low levels of flower thrips are also being reported in pepper.

Respondents around Immokalee report that thrips numbers remain low. These are mainly flower thrips but low levels of melon thrips have been detected in a few locations.
Mites

Respondents in Palm Beach report broadmite pressure is low but that some scattered occurrence at low levels continues to be seen in pepper. A few two spotted spider mites have been reported showing up on eggplants.

Around Immokalee, broadmite populations remain low in pepper and eggplant.

Growers and scouts in Homestead report that broad mites are increasing somewhat compared to a few weeks ago.

Diseases

Drier air and minimal rainfall has reduced disease pressure over the past two weeks.

Bacterial Spot

Around southwest Florida, bacterial spot remains the most significant disease in both tomato and pepper production. In many fields lesions are present up to the tops of plants. Growers report that spread has slowed in response to drier conditions and hope that continued fair weather will allow new growth to escape infection.

On the east Coast, reports indicate that bacterial leaf spot remains widespread in both pepper and tomato but has slowed somewhat in the past few days. Incidence and severity varies from remain low to high depending on the location and age of the crop.

Reports from Homestead indicate that bacteria spot has been active on tomato. Severity varies from low to moderate with some hot spots.

Specialty growers producing heirloom tomatoes report that bacterial spot is present on certain tomato varieties but not others and that the differences in variety susceptibility can be stunning.

Bacterial Speck

Dr. Ken Pernezny, Plant Pathologist at the UF/IFAS Everglades Research and Education Center reports that he has been seeing significant levels of bacterial speck (not spot) in research plots in the Ft. Pierce area.

Ken notes that speck lesions on tomato fruit are quite distinct from those associated with bacterial spot. Fruit displays black specks with dark green haloes on immature fruit and black specks often associated with yellow haloes on red fruit. On the leaves, the symptoms are almost identical to bacterial spot. Ken indicates that this is the most significant outbreak of this disease that he has seen in a number of years. He reports as much as 50% culls from speck in control plots!

Control is as for bacterial spot. Dr Pernezny notes that copper may be more effective against speck than spot, because there has been less selection pressure for tolerance.

Bacterial soft rot

Growers on both coasts have reported scattered occurrences of bacterial soft rot on crops as diverse as squash and bok choy.
Early blight
Growers and scouts on both coasts report mostly low to moderate incidence of early blight in eggplant, potato, and tomato. New infections appear to have slowed in recent days.

Target spot
Growers and scouts in all areas report continuing problems with target spot but note that pressure seems to have abated over the past weeks or so.

Tomato Yellow Leaf Curl Virus
Growers and scouts around Southwest Florida note that Tomato Yellow Leaf Curl virus pressure is increasing in several places, especially in younger fields. While overall incidence remains relatively low, there have been some reports of localized hotspots showing 20-30% symptoms with some whole fields averaging around 10% at second tie. Destruction of old tomato fields and other crops are resulting in migration of whiteflies.

Reports from east coast production areas continue to report low incidence of Tomato Yellow Leaf Curl infected tomatoes. In most instances infected plants are still few and far between although several reports note the occurrence of secondary spread from initial infections. The incidence of infection remains mostly below 1% although there have been a few scattered reports of fields in the 2-3% range. A few recent reports indicate that new infections are being observed in conjunction with incoming migrations of infected whiteflies.

Sclerotina
Around southwest Florida, growers and scouts have noted the occurrence of white mold in tomato and pepper.

Sclerotina has also been noted on pepper in Palm Beach production areas.

Symptoms of Sclerotinia vary between crops. White mold in beans usually appears after flowering. The disease often appears in leaf axils and advances into the stem, producing water-soaked spots that increase in size, girdling the stem, and killing it above the point of infection. The disease can also enter the plant through leaves or pods that touch the soil where sclerotia or infected plant parts act as inoculum.

In tomato and potato, infection typically starts at flowering. Water-soaked spots are usually the first symptom, which is followed by invasion of the stem, girdling, and death of the upper part of the stem that turns a light gray. As with bean, the disease can also begin where the plant contacts the soil or infected plant debris. Large portions of the field may become diseased, producing large, circular, areas of dead plants. The black sclerotia formed by the fungus are often found inside infected stems.

A good indicator of Sclerotinia disease is the presence of small, black sclerotia (resting structures) of the fungus. Sclerotia vary in size and shape. Sclerotia can form on the surface of plant parts as well as inside the stems of tomato and potato. The sclerotia enable the fungus to survive from season to season and are the source of inoculum to infect crops. Recycled irrigation water may move sclerotia to fields where sclerotia are not present.

In beans, Tospin M 70 or Rovral 50 WP or 4 F applied at bloom stage has been effective in controlling white mold. Rovral 50 WP or 4 F has been used with good results in lettuce. For potato, Rovral 50 WP or 4 F and Botran 75 W are recommended for Sclerotinia control. With the loss of Benlate, tomato producers don’t have good alternatives although Quadris may give some relief.
**Phytophthora**

Scouts in Palm Beach continue to report scattered cases of *Phytophthora capsici* on all ages of pepper and eggplant. In some places, reports indicate that aerial phytophthora is active on pepper.

Reports of phytophthora on eggplant have been received from Homestead.

Around southwest Florida, *Phytophthora capsici* continues to be reported on pepper and squash from a number of widely scattered sites from Naples to Immokalee.

All parts of pepper are susceptible to the disease. Infection is most common at the soil line, and starts as a dark, water-soaked area. Stem lesions are dark brown to black and result in girdling and plant death. At first, leaf spots are irregular to round, and water-soaked. With age, the spots enlarge, turn a light tan, and may crack. Fruit rot appears as dark green, water soaked areas. Infected areas may be bordered by white fungal growth during wet periods. Infected fruit becomes shrunken, wrinkled and brown, and remains attached to the stem.

**Summer squash is highly susceptible to Phytophthora foliar blight and fruit rot.** Under warm, wet conditions, *P. capsici* can devastate entire squash plantings in a matter of days.

Preplant soil fumigation is recommended and fungicides such as Ridomil Gold and UltraFlourish should be used preventively. Fungicides with different modes of action should be rotated to prevent the buildup of fungicide resistance. Rotating or tank-mixing a systemic with a contact fungicide such as maneB is recommended. Resistance has not been identified in cultivars currently grown in Florida.

**Powdery Mildew**

Respondents across south Florida note that powdery mildew is active on a range of cucurbits including squash and cucumbers. Some reports indicate reduced pressure will others note increased pressure over the past few days. Strobilurin fungicides like Quadris and Nova are said to be providing good control.

**Gummy Stem Blight**

Gummy stem blight is widely present on cucurbits around southwest Florida. Incidence and severity ranges from moderate to high. Affected crops include watermelon and cucumber. There have also been some reports of gummy stem blight on transplants.

Given the high incidence of gummy stem blight this fall resulting in high inoculum loads and the projected continuation of favorable conditions for development, watermelon producers should be vigilant on the spring crop.

Nighttime temperatures and moisture conditions are ideal during much of the growing season in Florida. The optimum temperature for infection is 61 to 75°F. After a spore germinates on a susceptible host, the fungus penetrates the plant tissue and symptoms can appear in 7 to 12 days. Wounds assist in promoting infection.

Gummy stem blight can be successfully managed if the grower utilizes a combination of control strategies. Control of primary sources of inoculum is important. Growers should purchase clean seed from reputable companies produced in arid western locations and avoid transplants that have gummy stem blight or other diseases.

In addition to seed, the most important source of primary inoculum is organic debris from previous cucurbit crops. After harvest, crop debris from should be plowed under to reduce inoculum. Volunteers and
wild cucurbits provide an additional source of inoculum. Crop rotation and destruction of weed hosts are important for gummy stem blight control.

Multiple applications of fungicides are necessary to control gummy stem blight. It is important to begin a fungicide program prior to the first sign of gummy stem blight. In south Florida, the spray program should be initiated soon after emergence. Manzate, Bravo, Benlate and Quadris have given good results locally.

Dr Tom Kucharek UF/IFAS Plant Pathologist has passed on the following caution to growers. Cabrio 2.08 FL, Headline 2.08 FL, Quadris 2.08 FL, Nova and Abound 2.08 FL are in the strobilurin group of fungicides and they all have the same specific mode of action.

Resistance to this chemistry is present in some pathogens including gummy stem blight. Many isolates from Florida of Didymella bryoniae, the causal agent of gummy stem blight, are no longer sensitive to Quadris 2.08 FL. Thus, rotation of Quadris with Cabrio in a spray program should not be relied on for resistance management. Syngenta, the manufacturer of Quadris and Abound, and BASF, the manufacturer of Cabrio and Headline, will clearly state this situation on their future labels and are in the throws of informing users of these products about the close relatedness of these products.

Downy Mildew

Downy mildew is present on cucurbits including squash and cantaloupe from widely scattered locations across south Florida.

The downy mildew fungus, Psuedoperonospora cubensis, can complete its life cycle in three to four days. Because downy mildew increases over time at a rapid rate, spraying twice per week may necessary if the grower intends to hold the crop for later harvests. Since temperature and humidity in south Florida are nearly always right for the development of this disease, growers should apply protectant fungicides prior to the appearance of symptoms. Fungicides that are effective include, chlorothalonil (Bravo types), mancozeb (Dithane, Manex II, Manzate, Penncozeb), Ridomil Bravo, Ridomil MZ 68, or Quadris. Do not use Quadris in repeated sprays. It should be rotated with other fungicides for resistance management purposes.

Downy mildew is also present on lettuce.

Botrytis

A few isolated reports of grey mold botrytis on pepper have been reported in the Devils Garden area.

Mosaic

Growers and scouts are beginning to report finding low levels of virus in squash in scattered locations across south Florida. Some locally heavy hotspots with a higher incidence of the disease have been reported.

Reports from Homestead indicate that mosaic viruses are beginning to increase in cucurbits and tomato.

Fusarium

Growers and scouts around southwest Florida are also noting an increase in the incidence of fusarium crown rot in tomato particularly where water levels have been held high for frost protection.

Reports from Palm Beach indicate that there has been some increase in the incidence of fusarium crown rot over the past few weeks.
**Anthracnose**

Growers and scouts operating in the Palm Beach area are reporting the occurrence of anthracnose on pepper. Incidence and occurrence is mostly low although a few hot spots with higher infection rates have been noted.

**Anthracnose has also been reported on strawberries in Palm Beach and Homestead.**

**New Weed Found**

Dr. Mary Lamberts UF/IFAS Vegetable Extension Agent IV reports that a new weed has been found on a 6 square mile area in the Homestead. It's has been identified as *Boerhavia erecta* L., a.k.a. the Erect Spiderling. It's in Nyctaginaceae, the Four-O'Clock family. More information can be found in the ISB Atlas of Florida Vascular Plants website at [http://www.plantatlas.usf.edu/main.asp?plantID=2922](http://www.plantatlas.usf.edu/main.asp?plantID=2922).

**Call For International Cooperation On Leafminer Research**

Dear leafminer fly researchers,

I wish to seek for assistance from you all to introduce me to entomologists, and other extension/training staff that are currently doing research, training and extension activities on leafminer flies (*Liriomyza* spp.) and its parasitoids. At present, I am involved in *Liriomyza* spp. management research/training/extension efforts in the Philippines. May I also invite you to visit the following link to know more about our *Liriomyza* spp. project the Philippines:


In future, I would like to interact globally with researchers/training & extension staff on *Liriomyza* spp. management. Your kind cooperation to introduce me and the web link researchers interested in *Liriomyza* spp. is requested by providing me their E-mail as well as postal addresses. Is it also possible please to provide literature searches or links/sites related to leafminer flies (*Liriomyza* spp.) and its parasitoids?

Hoping to hear from you all soon. Thanks and regards.

Dr. R. C. Joshi,
Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice)
Maligaya, Muñoz Science City, Nueva Ecija-3119
PHILIPPINES
E-mail: rcjoshi@philrice.gov.ph or joshiravi@hotmail.com

**Food Safety Program Offered Free to Florida Producers**

*Florida Fruit and Vegetable Research and Education Foundation is offering growers and packinghouse managers an opportunity to implement an individualized food safety program.* A federal grant pays for everything except any future improvements the producer decides are necessary. It may even help with the cost of an Independent Third Party Audit.

*The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services awarded the Foundation $500,000 early in 2002 to teach producers about basic Good Agricultural Practices.* Glades Crop Care will work with participants to determine their needs, and then provide educational toolkits that outline food safety standards, and present guidelines for evaluating and modifying any potential problem areas.
The program benefits producers of all types of fruits and vegetables, and is applicable throughout the entire state of Florida.

Deployment of the educational toolkits started in November 2002, and will continue through April of 2003. To be included in Florida's Food Safety Initiative, contact Glades Crop Care at (561) 746-3740, or Ray Gilmer of the FFVA's Research and Education Foundation at (407) 894-1351. Glades Crop Care will send a letter requesting more information about each producer's individual situation.

To learn more about the program, visit the Glades Crop Care website at www.gladescropcare.com.

Relevance of Food Safety Programs

The need for a food safety initiative has been promoted for several reasons. Foremost is the globalization of our food supply along with consumer demand for a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables all year round. Additional pressure for a high level of microbial food safety comes from the fresh cut industry, which offers an array of ready-to-eat, pre-cut salads, fruits (notably melons) and vegetables. Along with these consumer trends, changes in U.S. demographics also play a role. As the baby boomers get older, more people are elderly and may have compromised immune systems or chronic diseases. Consequently, more people are especially susceptible to food-borne illnesses.

With these consumer trends, unfortunately, has come a nationwide increase in produce-related food borne illnesses. The following figures come from Food Safety Begins on the Farm: A Grower's Guide, published by Cornell University as part of a national effort to develop Good Agricultural Practices (GAP's), jointly sponsored by the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (this GAP task force includes representatives from the University of Florida and Georgia). Between 1970 and 1997 per capita consumption of fruits in the U.S. went up 24%, from 577 to 718 pounds. With this increase, however, the number of outbreaks of food related illnesses has steadily risen. Between 1996 and 2000, 113 outbreaks with 3,805 individual cases associated with produce were reported to the Food and Drug Administration.

In these outbreaks, bacterial human pathogens outnumbered other types of pathogens as the disease-causing agents. The most common of these bacterial pathogens are Salmonella spp. and E. coli O157:H7, which accounted for over 75% of produce-related outbreaks between 1988 and 1998. These bacteria belong to groups that have both human and animal reservoirs, and are also associated with fecal contamination. These facts help explain why food safety experts place great emphasis on worker health, safety and hygiene and on the management of animals, manure and other biosolids in and around farms where fruits and vegetables are grown. In fact, a farm's management of toilet facilities, hand washing stations and the cleanliness of the audit. For produce run through a packinghouse or hydro-cooler, the same issues can be even more important!

But there is important good news. The latest round of testing by the Food and Drug Administration shows that 98.4% of the samples are free of microbial contamination from eight commodities. Out of 687 samples, 11 tested positive for Salmonella and Shigella. A 1999 survey of imported produce showed 94% to be free of pathogens. (Information excerpted from the Glades Crop Care website.)

OPPORTUNITY – Exhibitors wanted for the National Association of County Agricultural Agents Annual Meeting to be held in Orlando in July 2004. This is a great opportunity to present your products to the more than 2500 County Extension Agents from all over the United States that are expected to attend this meeting.

To reserve a place contact Ed Jennings at 352-793-6376.
Websites

The Weed Science Society of America (WSSA) has a web page offering a rather extensive list of resources related to the biological control of weeds, and symposia and production of literature on the topic. You can visit the page at [http://www.wssa.net/subpages/herb/biocontrol.htm](http://www.wssa.net/subpages/herb/biocontrol.htm)

BlueSkySearch.com bills itself as the on-line job center for the produce industry. Listings include positions in management, production and sales. Will many positions are located in other parts of the country, at least one recent listing was for a position here in SW Florida. Go to [http://www.blueskysearch.com/AgricultureJobs.htm](http://www.blueskysearch.com/AgricultureJobs.htm)

Up Coming Meetings

Miami Dade

**January 22, 2003**

**General Standards Training and Exam**

8:30 Am - 5 PM

John D Campbell Ag Center

18710 SW 288th Street

Homestead, Florida

Contact 305-248-3311 for more information

Palm Beach County

**January 15, 2003**

**General Standards/Core Test Review**

8 AM - 10 AM

**Private Applicator Test Review**

1 PM - 3 PM

**Testing** - Any Category

8 AM - 4 PM

Belle Glade Extension Office

2976 State Road 15

Belle Glade, Florida

Contact 561-996-1655.

Southwest Florida

**January 22, 2003**

**Understanding and Dealing with “Problem Areas” on Florida’s Sandy Soils: a Workshop Geared toward Sugarcane, Citrus and Vegetables**

Hendry County Extension Office

8:30 AM - Noon

1085 Pratt Boulevard

LaBelle, Florida

Contact 863-674-4092 for details.

**February 4, 2003**

**Advanced Compost Training**

Collier County Cooperative Extension Service

14700 Immokalee Road

Naples, FL 33964
St Lucie County

February 11, 2003

**IR4 and the Florida Greenhouse Vegetable Producer:**
Registration of pesticides for vegetable crops 3:30 – 6:00 PM

St. Lucie County Hurricane House
8400 Picos Road
Fort Pierce, FL

Contact 772-462-1660

February 12, 2003

**Vegetable Disease Identification for Greenhouse and Field Production**

Indian River Research and Education Center
2199 Rock Road
Fort Pierce, FL 34945

Contact 772-468-3922

Other Meetings

March 10 –13, 2003

**Florida Post-Harvest Horticulture Industry Tour**
Contact Steve Sargent at 352-392-1928

April 29-30, 2003

**FACTs - Florida Agricultural Conference and Trade Show**
Lakeland Center, Lakeland, Florida

Quotable Quotes

Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there. -- Will Rogers

You can observe a lot just by watching. -- Yogi Berra

When they call the roll in the Senate, the Senators do not know whether to answer 'Present' or 'Not guilty.' -- Theodore Roosevelt

Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work --Thomas Edison

On the Lighter Side

Growing Up … Do you remember when …

"Hey Dad," My Son asked the other day, "what was your favorite fast food when you were growing up?"

"We didn't have fast food when I was growing up."

"C'mon, seriously. Where did you eat?" "We ate at home," I explained.
"My Mom cooked every day and when Dad got home from work, we all sat down together at the table, and if I didn't like what she put on my plate I had to sit there until I did like it."

By this time, my Son was laughing so hard I was afraid He was going to suffer some serious internal damage, so I didn't tell him the part about how I had to get my Father's permission to leave the table.

Here are some other things I would have told him about my childhood if I had figured his system could handle it.

My parents never wore Levi's, set foot on a golf course, traveled out of the country, flew in a plane or had a credit card.

In their later years they had something called a "revolving charge card," but they never actually used it. It was only good at Sears-Roebuck. Or maybe it was Sears and Roebuck. Either way, there is no Roebuck anymore.

My parents never drove me to soccer practice. This was because soccer back then was just for the girls.

We actually did walk to school. By the time you were in the 6th grade it was not cool to ride the bus unless you lived more than 4 or 5 miles from the school, even when it was raining or there was ice or snow on the ground.

Outdoor sports consisted of stickball, snowball fights, building forts, making snowmen and sliding down hills on a piece of cardboard. No skateboards, roller blades or trail bikes.

I was 13 before I tasted my first pizza. It was a Sam's Pizza at the East end of Fruit Street in Milford. My friend, Steve took me there to try what he called "pizza pie." When I bit into it, I burned the roof of my mouth and the cheese slid off, swung down and plastered itself against my chin. It's still the best pizza I ever had.

Pizzas were not delivered to your house back then, but the milk was. I looked forward to winter because the cream in the milk was on top of the bottle and it would freeze and push the cap off. Of course, us kids would get up first to get the milk and eat the frozen cream before our mother could catch us.

I never had a telephone in my room and we got our first color TV when I was 12.

There was no such thing as a computer or a hand held calculator. We were required to memorize the "times tables." Believe it or not, we were tested each week on our ability to perform mathematics with nothing but a pencil and paper. We took a spelling test every day. There was no such thing as a "social promotion." If you flunked a class, you repeated that grade the following year. Nobody was concerned about your "self esteem." We had to actually do something praiseworthy before we were praised. We learned that you had to earn respect.

All newspapers were delivered by boys and most all boys delivered newspapers. I delivered the "Milford Daily News" six days a week. It cost seven cents a paper, of which I got to keep 2 cents. On Saturday, I had to collect the 42 cents from my customers. My favorite customers were the ones who gave me 50 cents and told me to keep the change. My least favorite customers were the ones who seemed to never be home on collection day.

Movie stars kissed with their mouths shut on screen. Touching someone else's tongue with yours was called French kissing and they just didn't do that in the movies back then. I had no idea what they did in French movies. French movies were considered dirty and we weren't allowed to see them.

You never saw the Lone Ranger, Roy Rogers or anyone else actually kill someone. The heroes back then
would just shoot the gun out of the bad guy's hand. There was no blood and violence.

When you were sick, the Doctor actually came to your house.

Drugs were something you purchased at a pharmacy in order to cure an illness.

If we dared to "sass" our parents, or any other grown-up, we immediately found out what soap tasted like. For more serious infractions, we learned about something called a "this hurts me more than it hurts you." I never did quite understand that one....

In those days, parents were expected to discipline their kids. There was no interference from the government. "Social Services" or "Family Services" had not been invented (the ninth and tenth amendments to the constitution were still observed in those days.)

I must be getting old because I find myself reflecting back more and more and thinking I liked it a lot better back then.

If you grew up in a generation before there was fast food, you may want to share some of these memories with your kids or grandchildren. Just don't blame me if they wet themselves laughing. Growing up today sure ain't what it used to be like.

Contributors include: Joel Allingham/AgriCare, Inc, Karen Armbrester/SWFREC, Kathy Carbiener/Agricultural Pest Management, Jim Connor/SWFREC, Bruce Corbitt/West Coast Tomato Growers, Fred Heald/Farmers Supply, Sarah Hornsby/AgCropCon, Cecil Howell/H&R Farm, Loren Horsman/Glades Crop Care, Bruce Johnson/General Crop Management, Dr Mary Lamberts/Miami-Dade County Extension, Leon Lucas/Glades Crop Care, Gene McAvoy/Hendry County Extension, Alice McGhee/Thomas Produce, Jimmy Morales/Pro Source One, Tim Nychk/Nychk Bros. Farm, Chuck Obern/C+B Farm, Teresa Olczyk/ Miami-Dade County Extension, Dr Ken Pernezny/EREC, Dr. Pam Roberts/SWFREC, Dr Nancy Roe/Farming Systems Research, Wes Roan/6 L's, Kevin Seitzinger/Gargiulo, Jay Shivler/ F& F Farm, Ken Shuler/Stephen’s Produce, Ed Skvarch/St Lucie County Extension, John Stanford/LNA Farm, Mike Stanford/MED Farms, Dr. Phil Stansly/SWFREC, Eugene Tolar/Red Star Farms, Dr Charlie Vavrina/SWFREC, Mark Verbeck and Donna Verbeck/GulfCoast Ag.

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Gene McAvoy
Extension Agent II
Vegetable/Ornamental Horticulture 863-674-4092 phone
Hendry County Extension Office 941-860-8811 mobile - Nextel Agnet 28950
PO Box 68 863-674-4097 fax
LaBelle, Florida 33975 GMcAvoy@mail.ifas.ufl.edu

http://hchort.ifas.ufl.edu/
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Thomas Produce Company
Of South Florida
Grower and Shippers of Quality Vegetables
9905 Clint Moore Road
Boca Raton, Florida 33496

Robert Murray
Florida Favorite Fertilizer
787 Overriver Drive
North Fort Myers, Florida 33903
Phone 800-457-0807  Cell 941-707-2272

Michael P Seese
KeyPlex
PO Box 11094
Naples, FL 34101
Phone 941-910-4837  Fax 941-514-0168

Fred Heald
Farmers Supply Inc
710 Broward Street
Immokalee, FL 34142
Phone 941-657-8254  Fax 941-657-2005

LaBelle Plant World, Inc.
Tommy Smith: President
Scott Smith: Vice President
We Grow Plants for the Pros
LaBelle, Florida  Phone 863-675-2020

Damon Shelor
ProSource One
Immokalee, Florida
Office 941-657-8374  Cell 941-707-6142
E-mail: dshelor@ProSourceOne.com

Gargiulo
Growers Shippers Importers Exporters
David Pensabene: Production Manager
Naples Operations
Phone 941-353-0300  Fax 941-353-3407

Ed Early
Dupont Agricultural Products
5100 South Cleveland Avenue
Fort Myers, Florida 33907
Phone 941-332-1467  Mobile 941-994-8594

Shelby F. Hinrichs
NuFarm Agriculture USA
6943 Scarboro Drive
Fort Myers, Florida 33919
Phone 941-437-9970  Fax 941-437-2646

Larry McCauley
Griffin LLC
5843 Deer Flag Drive
Lakeland, Florida 33811-2078
Phone 863-607-9303  Fax 863-607-9403

Ted and Trudy Winsberg
Green Cay Farms, Inc.
Rt. 1, Box 331B
Boynton Beach, Florida 33437-9727
Phone 561-499-5345

Donna Muir Strickland
Monsanto Crop Protection
PO Box 1723
LaBelle, Florida 33975
Phone 863-675-4250
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Glades Crop Care, Inc.
Leaders in Crop Health Management
Charlie Mellinger, Ph.D.
Phone 561-746-3740 Fax 561-746-3775

Rachel Walters
Bayer CropScience
5243 Tamiami Court
Cape Coral, Florida 33904
Phone 239-542-8831 Cell 239-707-1198

Glen Kaufman
Paramount Seeds, Inc.
PO Box 1866
Palm City, Florida 34991
Phone 772-221-0653 Fax 772-221-0102

Walter Preston
Manatee Fruit Company
PO Box 128
Palmetto, Florida 34220-0128
Phone 941-722-3279 Fax 941-729-5151

Robert F. Gregg
Syngenta Crop Protection
11051 Championship Drive
Fort Myers, FL 33913
Office 941-561-8568 Cell 239-872-8936

CERTIS USA
Dr. Adam Muckenfuss 561-781-2233
Sales: Joe Craig 941-965-1145
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PRODUCTION SOILS LLC
Sam Hipp
2644 East Oakland Park
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33306
Office 954-563-8753 Fax 954-563-0588

Scott Allison
DIAMOND R FERTILIZER
1155 Commerce Drive
LaBelle, Florida 33935
Phone 863-675-3700 Cell 941-851-0613

Bill Hunt Company, LLC
Agricultural Spray Technology
Miami, Florida USA
Phone 305-238-0991 Fax 305-254-6319
bilihun@spraytec.com www.spraytec.com

Steven Farrington
Dow AgroSciences LLC
101 Southhall Lane, Suite 400
Maitland, Florida 32751
Phone 407-841-6892 Cell 407-832-263
Special Thanks to the generous support of our sponsors; who make this publication possible.

Sarah Hornsby, CCA  
*Agricultural Crop Consulting, Inc*  
Scouting: Manatee, Hillsborough, Collier  
Office/Fax 941-776-1122  
Cell 941-713-6116  
Email: AgCropCon@aol.com

Donald Allen  
**AGLIME SALES INC**  
1375 Thornburg Road  
Babson Park, Florida 33827-9549  
Office 863-638-1481  Fax 863-638-2312  
Mobil 863-287-2925

Bobbit Jenkins  
*BASF Corporation*  
11100 Lakeland Circle  
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*Monsanto Crop Protection*  
1089 Forsythia Lane  
West Palm Beach, FL 33415  
Office 561-478-4970  Fax 561-478-4970  
Cell 561-719-6820

Justin Cain  
**Chemical Dynamics**  
PO Box 486  
Plant City, Florida 33564-0486  
Office 813-752-4950  Fax 863-638-1383  
Mobil 863-581-0431

Chuck Obern  
*C & B Farm*  
CR 835  
Clewiston, FL 33415  
Office 863-983-8269  Fax 863-983-8030  
Cell 941-250-0551

Bart Hoopingarner  
**Cerexagri**  
11933 73rd St. E  
Parrish, FL 34219  
Office 941-737-7444  Fax 941-776-8127  
bart.hoopingarner@cerexagri.com

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