

# RIVER RAMBLINGS

The newsletter of the  
Indian River Citrus League

OCTOBER 2013

## Parker Platts is the new Fruit Crops Extension Agent



By Dr. Joe Schaefer, South Florida District Extension Director

Mr. Platts brings life-long citrus industry experience to regional UF-IFAS Extension position.

The University of Florida/IFAS/Extension is pleased to announce that Mr. Parker Platts has been selected to be the Treasure Coast's Citrus and Fruit Crops Extension Agent. There are approximately 127,000 acres of citrus managed by 600 different producers on Florida's Treasure Coast (Indian River, St. Lucie, and Martin counties). Mr. Platts will develop, implement, evaluate and promote comprehensive educational programs to help growers and landowners in this area effectively interpret and incorporate findings of current science and technology. This is a critical position that will help growers best address devastating diseases that have plagued the industry for many years. Part of his outreach program will teach growers the most effective strategies to deal with Best Management Practices (BMPs) to protect water quality, Integrated Pest Management (IPM), water management, labor, business and other related topics. Mr Platts will also help growers and landowners explore the viability of diversification with alternative land uses and enterprises. He will have many resources at his disposal to help reach his goals including other county extension faculty in the South District, citrus agents assigned to other parts of the state, extension specialists and researchers located at the Citrus Research and Education Center (Lake Alfred), the Indian River Research and Education Center (Ft. Pierce), other centers in central and south Florida, and the main University of Florida campus (Gainesville). Parker will also be assisted by the Indian River Citrus League and regional growers.



Dr. Joe Schaefer, South District Extension Director, stated that UF/IFAS/Extension and growers are extremely fortunate that a person with Parker's experience, connections and stature in the community has accepted this position. Mr Platts graduated Cum Laude with a Bachelor's Degree in Citrus Culture from Florida Southern College in Lakeland. He managed Platts Groves, Inc. for more than 20 years, and coordinated the production of fresh and processed citrus crops from 12,000 acres of groves for Sun Ag. Inc. in Fellsmere. His community service includes active membership in the St. Lucie County Farm Bureau, the UF/IFAS St. Lucie County Extension Advisory Committee and the State Citrus Advisory Committee.

Parker's new office is located at the St. Lucie County Extension building, 8400 Picos Road, Ft. Pierce (772-462-1600).

For additional information contact Dr. Joe Schaefer, South Florida District Extension Director, 561-993-1280, [natres@ufl.edu](mailto:natres@ufl.edu).

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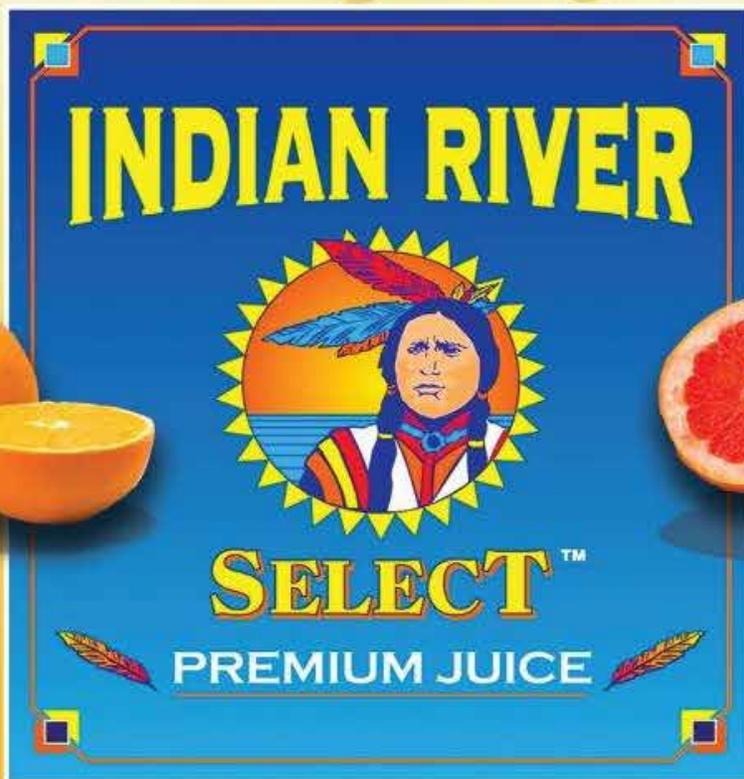
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# **Grown, Picked, Squeezed and Bottled in Florida**

# Florida Passes New AGRITOURISM Law

by Ben Parks, Ben Parks and Associates

Over the years, farmers, ranchers and growers have gone out of their way to educate the public about where and how our food is grown. In 2007, the Legislature passed legislation which allowed agritourism in Florida. As Florida agritourism continued to grow, operators were faced with many issues and concerns that come with having visitors on their property. The 2013 Legislature addressed these concerns.



A new law (SB1106) was passed to help agritourism operations in this state. The law, which took effect on July 1, 2013, eliminates duplicative regulation by preventing local governments from prohibiting, restricting, regulating, or otherwise limiting an agritourism activity on land that has been classified as agricultural by your local Property Appraiser. Most importantly, the bill establishes a limitation on legal liability from the inherent risk for landowners and agritourism operators if proper signage is posted on the land.

With this new law, the Florida Agritourism Association (FATA) was formed to support the growing agritourism market in the state. The founders of FATA were instrumental in helping pass the new agritourism law in favor of agritourism operators.

Under the law, agritourism operators are not liable for injury, death, damage, or loss to a participant resulting from the inherent risks of agritourism activities as long as a warning sign is posted in accordance with the statute. If a warning sign is posted, the bill provides agritourism operators with an affirmative defense to any claim for injury or death. The sign must be placed in a "clearly visible location" at the entrance of the property and the site where the activity takes place. The sign must have black letters, with each letter a minimum of one inch in height and there must be enough color contrast to be clearly visible.

The sign and contract must include the following wording:

## WARNING

Under Florida law, an agritourism operator is not liable for injury or death of, or damage or loss to, a participant in an agritourism activity conducted at this agritourism location if such injury, death, damage, or loss results from the inherent risks of the agritourism activity. Inherent risks of agritourism activities include, among others, risks of injury inherent to land, equipment, and animals, as well as the potential for you to act in a negligent manner that may contribute to your injury, death, damage, or loss. You are assuming the risk of participating in this agritourism activity.

The new law does not prevent or limit the liability of an agritourism operator if they commit gross negligence or displays willful or wanton disregard for safety or if the operator intentionally injures the participant.

Agritourism operators throughout the state should familiarize themselves with the law to make sure that they are aware of the risks associated with being an operator and ensure that they are protected from liability at the maximum level.

Operators should also consider becoming a member of the Florida Agritourism Association for education, legislative advocacy and marketing. We view Florida agritourism as the ultimate field trip for the visitor and added value for the farmer, rancher and grower. The Association's website is under construction and should be up and running by the end of the year. Becoming a member of FATA gives agritourism operators many benefits. As a member, you will be given opportunities to attend educational and networking events, become an Accredited Florida Agritourism Attraction, and the ability to purchase legislatively compliant signage for your property.

If you have any questions about FATA, or ways to become a member please contact FATA at [visitfloridafarms@gmail.com](mailto:visitfloridafarms@gmail.com) or Ben Parks at 850-559-1155.



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# Florida Citrus Hall of Fame Nominations

## By John Jackson, President

Most of you know that the Florida Citrus Hall of Fame honors those distinguished leaders that have made significant contributions to the Florida citrus industry. Over the years many of your fellow Indian River growers, packers, researchers, etc. have been recognized. You may not know just how the selection process takes place or what other activities the Florida Citrus Hall of Fame supports.

Selection into the Hall of Fame starts with a nomination package. Deadline for making a nomination is November 1 of each year. A nomination form and instructions how to submit can be obtained on line (<http://floridacitrushalloffame.com/index.php/nominations/>) or from Ms. Brenda Burnette, Executive Director or John Jackson, President. The guidelines are fairly broad and nomination packages vary greatly. Once an individual is nominated, the information is provided to the members of the Selection Committee (there are twenty (20) which are elected for four year terms). In early December the committee will meet to consider nominations. At the Selection Committee meeting each nominee's qualifications are discussed. The committee then takes a preliminary vote to "narrow" the field to those that are clearly at the top of the list. Next the committee then determines how many candidates will be selected for the next class of inductees. Generally the number is between two and five depending on the quality of the nominations. For most years the Selection Committee has decided to induct three or four new honorees. Once the number of inductees is determined then the secret voting takes place. The by-laws for the Florida Citrus Hall of Fame state that in order to be selected for the honor, a candidate must receive a majority of votes. Therefore the process may take a while as the committee works hard to select the "best" ones from many well qualified individuals.

Over the years, a wide diversity of individuals have been selected; growers, packers, processors, researchers, teachers, extension, regulators, equipment manufacturers, marketing, trade associations, and the list goes on and on. Currently 174 names are inscribed on the Hall of Fame "tree" located at Florida Southern College. You can go the web site to see who they are and read a brief biography about each. This is the time of year the Florida Citrus Hall of Fame accepts nominations, we encourage each of you to help us in our endeavor to recognize those individuals that have made significant contributions to our industry. Once an individual has been nominated they can be resubmitted (a request to do so must be made every year to the committee!) for an additional 2 years (total of 3 years). Then the nominee must wait a year before they can be considered again.

The Florida Citrus Hall of Fame has been honoring individuals for more than 50 years; we celebrated our 51th year in 2013. We hope you will be part of the process and submit a candidate. The process can be most rewarding. What a gift to your children and grandchildren a copy of a Dad's or Mom's nomination package would make! They knew he was (is) involved with citrus, now they know just what all she did to make the industry a little better. More to come on other activities that the Florida Citrus Hall of Fame undertakes. You may want to circle the first Friday in March (the 7th next year) to attend the induction ceremony at Florida Southern College. An excellent way to say thanks to those that have contributed so much and an opportunity to meet friends, classmates and others involved in our great industry.

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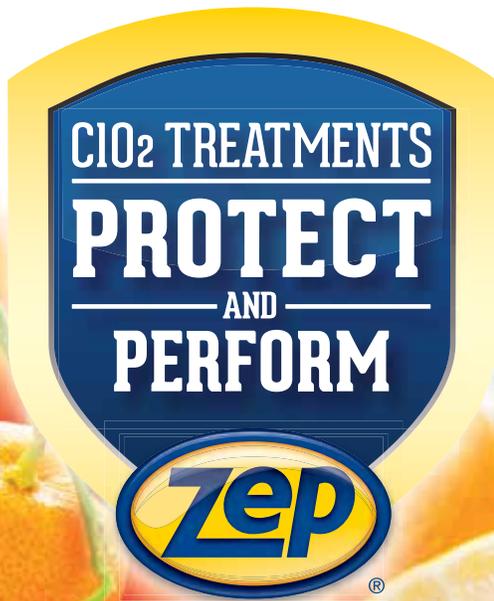
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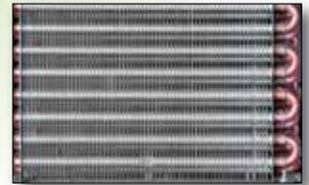
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# How Social Media Networks could help save citrus from the ravaging impacts of greening



By Steve Rogers, Posted in Digital Citrus, Press Releases

Originally published online in August 2013, updated October 2013

Last month, we talked about ways social media can accelerate communications between citrus growers and scientists in production, research and especially disease management. We introduced a private social network, called Podio (podio.com), and showed several examples of how Podio can help during freezes and with solving problems such as fruit drop. This month, we'll go into more detail of how Podio—and other applications like it—can connect stakeholders in Florida citrus together. With problems such as citrus greening where time is of the essence, efficient communications are needed to stay on top of imminent threats and understand better how to control them.

## Social Media and Data Aggregation

Podio is a social network that can be used privately just between invited members. In addition to peer-to-peer communications features like those provided by any social network, Podio also allows you to easily create custom apps for particular data collection needs. Podio's interface makes creating these apps easy. Examples include timesheets, grove surveys, well readings, crop test results, safety inspections, new variety performance results and more. Information from your apps can be exported directly from Podio into spreadsheets for more detailed analyses and reporting. This export feature makes Podio valuable in scientific research, especially if the experiment is a cooperative one between groups of growers and researchers. Connecting through Podio can reduce the communication lag between growers and researchers that need to share ready-to-use data. Photos are also easy to include in Podio data sets, so data are easily geo-referenced and visually recorded.

## Example of a Social Media System in HLB Problem Solving

For more detail on how this process works, Fig. 1 shows Podio in a "crowd-sourced" citrus research and disease management program. (I call it "crowd-sourced" because data originate in the field and are sourced to the cloud by growers.) In the upper left of Fig. 1, growers and other field personnel collect grove observations on their smartphones. Horticultural responses to nutrition programs, performance information on new varieties and other important data can be easily collected this way. The flow of data from the growers is indicated by the downward-facing "in" arrow, which feeds into Podio's central database that aggregates the information. In addition to numerical and descriptive data, the value of good photographs of tree responses should also not be overlooked. Geotagging the information makes it even more valuable. Data privacy issues can be addressed using a technique called, "data obfuscation", in which personally-identifiable information is hidden from view. The amount and type of information collected is limited only by urgency and need. The up-front cost of developing a platform such as Podio for data collection and sharing is much less than developing a fully custom solution from scratch.

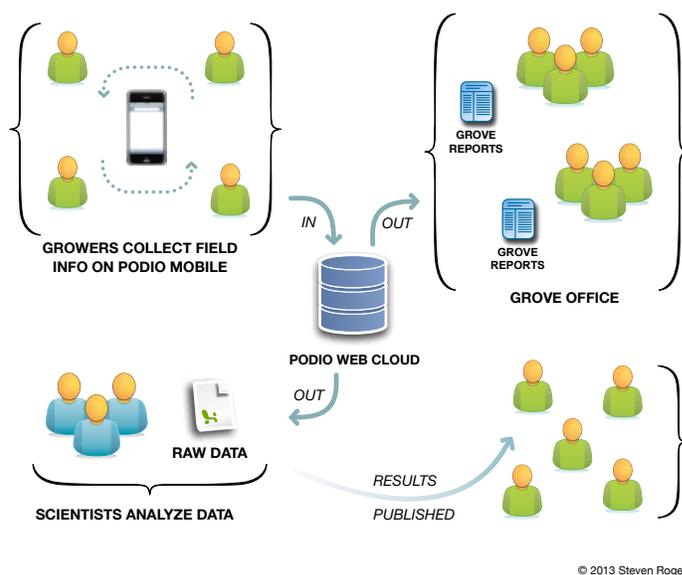


Fig. 1. Schematic showing how social media can be used in crowd-sourced citrus production and research.

## Social Media and Citrus Production

Once aggregated in the Podio servers, information is organized and archived. Users can not only customize their data-entry requirements, but reports generated from the archived data can be designed to meet specific needs. Since growers can all be connected to the same private network, they can share other useful information directly between themselves on their mobile devices. A CHMA program that uses push messaging would be very easy to implement in Podio, for example. Based on sharing criteria, grove offices can also have access to uploaded field information on their desktop computers (Fig. 1, upper right). This is useful for producing reports on grove condition that help with harvesting and caretaking operations, for example. The possibilities are too numerous to list, but they are only limited by the need for and willingness to work with such a system. Podio is flexible enough for individual users or companies to find it very useful, but we need to have a certain critical mass of users in the industry at large to gain the best value.

## Social Media and Citrus Research

Scientists who collaborate with growers can be granted access to download raw field data from the cloud in real-time (Fig. 1, lower left). Such information in Podio can be obtained in Microsoft Excel spreadsheets in a way that pre-formats it for statistical or other analyses. Raw field data are often difficult to understand due to background noise, so we are often initially interested in identifying important trends.

One excellent way to analyze noisy data is with a "neural network", which is good at identifying trends in otherwise "messy" data. (We used a neural network in the early days of the rust mite monitoring system that we introduced with Novartis Crop Protection. This technique helped us

# The Inaugural Indian River Citrus League

## GOLF Tournament 2014

### The Indian River Citrus League is hosting its first annual golf tournament, which kicks off the 2014 Florida Citrus Show.

The League's mission is to benefit the citrus and all agricultural interests on the Treasure Coast by finding solutions to multiple challenges that face agricultural producers in our region.

The funds raised at this tournament will be channeled towards issues faced by producers in our region today, so your sponsorship plays a huge part in the success of the League's efforts for improving the industry.

The 2014 golf tournament will take place at The Club at Pointe West, 7500 14th Lane, in Vero Beach on January 28, 2014. This will be a scramble with a shot gun start at 8:30am. Pointe West is a magnificent championship golf course managed by The Arnold Palmer Golf Management Company.

**So mark Tuesday, January 28, 2014 on your calendar now** and plan to join us as we kick off the 2014 Florida Citrus Show and banquet. This opportunity will be a great occasion to meet with the leaders of the Indian River Citrus Industry. We offer multiple sponsorship levels, which allow you to sponsor the tournament while enjoying the game with your friends and colleagues. As a sponsor you will receive full recognition for your donations at the tournament.

### Sponsorships Available

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*The Inaugural*  
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continued from page 8

identify hard-to-detect trends and improve our rust mite forecast models without the constraint of having replicated experimental trials.) Incidentally, a system like Podio works best as a compliment to, rather than a replacement for, another system that monitors specifically for certain pests.

## Automation and Accelerating Time to Publication of Useful Results

Basic analyses of exported data can be automated (e.g., relating fruit drop to weather or soil type), but scientists can personally examine data when more detailed analyses are warranted. Imagine if the industry had such a system set up during the fruit drop problem last year. We might already be well on our way to knowing what caused that problem!

The time from data collection in the field, to scientific analyses, to published results containing useable information, can be greatly reduced using communication systems that leverage the features of social media (Fig. 1, lower right). This, in turn, would lead to better technology-driven decision tools that use crowd-sourced data for more reliable results. The potential to develop these capabilities with private-sector technology partners should put social media systems for citrus production and scientific research higher up on the industry's radar.

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# SAVE THE DATE Florida Citrus Show

## Coming in January

Start the New Year off right by getting a leg up on the latest research and information needed by citrus professionals. The Florida Citrus Show is slated for Jan. 29-30 at the Havert L. Fenn Center in Ft. Pierce, so mark your calendars now.

Attendees can sit in on educational sessions providing the latest information on production trends, grove management practices, marketing updates, and insect and disease management strategies. Indoor and outdoor exhibit areas provide access to learn more about an array of products, services, and equipment. Stay tuned for updates on program details.



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## Getting Involved.

### membership opportunities

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