

Florida Citrus Nursery Industry, Budwood Program, and Current Disease Threats

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The Florida citrus budwood program began in 1953 as a voluntary program with a limited number of registered varieties. In 1995, the brown citrus aphid was found in Florida. This resulted in greater efficiency of decline-strain citrus tristeza virus (CTV) transmissions and accelerated losses on sour orange rootstock. In 1997, the budwood program became mandatory and required CTV testing for all commercial propagations. Today, there is concern about more severe stem-pitting strains. Since the year 2000, nursery propagations have decreased from near 6 million to approximately 2 million in the past year. The number of active nurseries continues to decline. There were 1,428 citrus nurseries in 1960 and today less than 50 nurseries actively produce nursery trees. The predominant variety propagated is 'Hamlin' orange followed by 'Valencia', accounting for 39% and 38%, respectively. Ray Ruby grapefruit is the third most popular with Earlygold and Midsweet oranges rounding out the top five. Florida citrus nurseries are propagating 84 different varieties. Rootstocks most propagated are Swingle citrumelo and Carrizo citrange, 47.8% and 22.5%, respectively. Kuharske citrange and Cleopatra mandarin represent 11.8% and 3.1%, respectively. Sun Chu Sha is being used in place of Cleopatra at 2.0% and Smooth Flat Seville as a replacement for sour orange at 1.6%.