



by PHILLIP RUCKS

PLANNING IS CRITICAL FOR CITRUS GROWERS TODAY

The nursery industry sure has changed. Since I opened Phillip Rucks Citrus Nursery 17 years ago, citrus canker and greening disease have taken a tremendous toll on nursery businesses.

Growers can no longer stroll into a nursery and buy citrus trees off the shelf like they were in Walmart. Today's nurseries are different: Trees are custom ordered, usually a year or more in advance.

Here at Phillip Rucks Citrus Nursery in Frostproof, we're already taking orders for 2015. Growers need to be planning ahead, anticipating their needs well ahead of planting time.

I encourage you to attend Dr. Jude Grosser's St. Helena Field Day in the fall. Dr. Grosser is a horticulture professor at University of Florida's Citrus Research and Education Center in Lake Alfred. You can learn what rootstocks and budwoods are performing the best as the citrus industry wrestles with greening and the Asian psyllid that spreads it. We can no longer say you will receive X number of boxes of fruit

like we could in bygone days.

We know greening has increased your cost of doing business. It's raised our costs as well. You raise the fruit and we raise the trees. We're all spending more on caretaking. We can't speculate on what you're going to want to buy. We can't stock inventory we may not be able to sell.

When the hurricanes plowed through Florida in 2004, they spread canker. The bare-root nurseries lost about 65 percent of tree inventory. Then in 2007-2008, when regulators made nurseries enclose citrus trees to protect

them from Asian psyllids, nearly half of the state's 70+ nurseries closed their doors. They just couldn't afford the increased cost of doing business. Today, the number of nurseries has increased to around 48 as we strive to meet your needs. But it is a different world.

The trees we were counting on for seed are dying. The new varieties don't have any seeds. So we're transitioning to growing from cuttings. We need nearly a year at best, and possibly up to 18 months, to produce your customized trees.

CITRUS

- New greening-tolerant root stocks now available
- Largest screened commercial citrus nursery in US
- DNA tested true-to-type citrus varieties and rootstocks available.
- Now contracting for 2015

PEACHES

- Licensed grower of low chill peaches on Flordaguard and MP-29 rootstocks
- Low chill varieties ideal for central and south Florida climates
- Licensed for new released varieties
- Now contracting for 2014-2015

EUCALYPTUS WINDBREAKS

- Hardy versatile tree that can grow nearly 40 ft in three years
- Provides crop protection from wind and disease
- Reduces soil loss, nutrition loss, agriculture chemical drift and irrigation loss
- Now contracting for 2014-2015

PONGAMIA

- Produce oilseed bearing nuts used for bioenergy and animal feed
- Drought resistant and saline tolerant "drop-in" crop
- No known major production related diseases or pests
- Grows on under productive land

PHILLIP RUCKS CITRUS NURSERY, INC.
Phillip Rucks, Owner



863-635-1948 • rucksnursery@aol.com
P.O. Box 1318 Frostproof, FL 33843 • www.ruckscitrusnursery.com