Spring Issue, 2007

Editor: Jeff Williamson

Officers: Donna Miller (president), Tom Cobb (vice president) Sheri Brothers (secretary and treasurer), Jeff Williamson (educational program director and newsletter editor).

Board of Directors: Joe Keel, Jerry Mixon, Alto Straughn, Bill Brasswell, Jack Green, and Paul Lyrene.

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Spring Blueberry Meeting and Field Day
Tuesday, March 6, 2007
Gulf Coast Research and Education Center – Balm
14625 CR 672, Wimauma, FL

8:00 a.m. Late Registration - late registration at the door is $20 per person and does not guarantee a meal. See enclosed pre-registration form for pre-registration rate.

8:00 a.m. Visit Trade Show
9:00 a.m. Annual Business Meeting – Ms. Donna Miller, FBGA president, presiding.

9:15 a.m. USHBC update – Mr. Ken Patterson, grower, Island Grove Ag. Products, Island Grove, Fla.

9:25 a.m. Food safety issues facing the Florida blueberry industry – Mr. Dan Botts, director, Environmental and Pest Management Division, Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association, Orlando, Fla.

9:55 a.m. Blueberry irrigation research- Dr. Jeff Williamson, horticulturist, Horticultural Sciences Dept., IFAS, University of Florida, Gainesville, Fla.

10:15 a.m. Research update on Dormex and chemical defoliation of blueberries - Dr. Jeff Williamson, horticulturist, Horticultural Sciences Dept., IFAS, University of Florida, Gainesville, Fla.

10:30 a.m. Break – visit trade show

10:50 a.m. Field identification of blueberry diseases – Ms. Amada Watson, graduate student, Department of Plant Pathology, IFAS, University of Florida, Gainesville, Fla.

11:10 a.m. Blueberry entomology research update- Dr. Oscar Liburd, Dept. of Entomology and Nematology, IFAS, University of Florida, Gainesville, Fla.

11:30 a.m. Propagation licenses and royalties for patented blueberry cultivars from the UF breeding program – Mr. Berry Treat, assistant director, Office of the Dean for Research, IFAS, University of Florida, Gainesville, Fla.

11:50 a.m. Spanish high tunnels for early fruit maturation – Mr. Jerry Mixon, grower, SunnyRidge Farm, Inc., Haines City, Fla.

12:05 p.m. Breakout group discussions on FBGA activities

12:30 p.m. Lunch and Trade Show

1:45 p.m. Depart for tour of Clear Springs Blueberry Farm – Details will be provided at the meeting.

Location and Directions to the Spring Blueberry Meeting and Field Day

The 2007 Spring Blueberry Meeting and Field Day will be held at the Gulf Coast Research and Education Center – Balm. The address is 14625 CR 672, Wimauma, FL. From I-75 north or south - take Exit 246 merge onto Big Bend Road/CR672 East towards US 301. Turn right onto US301/CR672 and travel approximately 1.4 miles. Turn left onto Balm Road/CR 672 and travel 7 miles. The center is located on the south side of Balm Road.
Booth space is still available for the FBGA Spring Blueberry Meeting and Field Day. Contact Ms. Sheri Brothers before February 26 for further information (352) 4815558.

Letter from the President

Your Board of Directors met in January to plan the Spring Field Day Meeting and this newsletter. We voted to make four changes in order to better meet the needs of our growers. First, each newsletter will contain a column written by a grower. Second, each association meeting will feature a grower as one of the speakers. Third, we will re-implement the breakout session time for growers to talk about specific concerns. And fourth, at the fall meeting we will have a separate short course for new growers.

The harvest is approaching and so is the rain and cool temperatures of a weakening El Niño. Disease and pollination will be on everyone's mind, and vigilance is needed with field scouting to detect Botrytis Bloom Blight and to use the proper fungicide spray. A mix of bumble bees and honey bees will help with pollination. One bumble bee can carry 4,500 particles of pollen, vs. 170 particles of pollen carried by a honey bee. Think about it!

The cool temperatures in September, October, November, and warm temperatures of December and part of January have crops in North and Central Florida blooming early and developing fruit, leaving them vulnerable to frosts and freezes that come in February and March. South Florida fields south of Interstate 4 will learn a lot about how fewer chill hours will affect their production and its timing.

In late January in north and central Florida I saw everything from Primadonna with tight buds, to ripe Emeralds and Snow Chasers. At the same time some growers were harvesting a few berries in south Florida .

Food safety should be one of our tops concerns during harvest. One grower with contaminated fruit can damage consumer confidence and ruin the season for all growers in Florida . Proper planning before harvest makes for smoother implementation.

Pre-harvest suggestions:

1. Take water samples from all sources used on farm - wells, ponds, lakes, etc., - and have them analyzed for microbial content, especially coliform bacteria and *E. coli*.
2. Review and implement food safety measures for your farm and educate your workers.
3. You and your marketer must have a working traceability protocol.
4. Sanitize all buckets and lugs before and during harvesting, and after each use.
5. Be ready all year for your third-party audit and consult your marketer about what is required for the audit.

I hope everyone has a wonderful harvest with strong prices!!!
Bee Branch Berry Farm is located in Labelle approximately 30 miles east of Fort Myers. When the farm was started in 1997 it was the most southerly blueberry farm in the state. The strategy behind the farm was to attempt to use its southerly location to get a jump on the rest of the state with early fruit. The plan was to try to peak our production in the second week of April when major producers in the Gainesville area were just getting started and pricing was strong.

10 years, and a large number of dead blueberry plants, later I can report that the strategy, in general, works. But it isn't easy. While we have enjoyed average fruit prices in excess of $7 per pound every year save one, there are many problems getting substantial production this far south.

Chilling in this location averages less than 60 hours through Christmas so very careful attention to varietal selection is required. Additionally we utilize a form of non dormant cultivation to assure reliable bud set, flowering and leafing with very low chill. This involves some complex and precise management of water and fertilizer profiles. Low chilling has become somewhat less of an issue with new varieties and Dormex but it still requires very careful management to achieve decent yields.

The very distinct wet/ dry seasons in south Florida place major burdens on drainage and leaf disease control. It is not unusual to get rain every day for a month or to get 2 inches a day every day for a week. Drainage must be absolutely flawless. This is not easy to achieve in the low flat sheet flow prone lands of south Florida. Very wet summer conditions also severely exacerbate leaf spot issues and special control measures are required.

My brother Lee and I are currently working on ways to move our production further to the left (earlier). We would rather compete with inferior Chilean CA fruit in March than the growing volume of quality fruit coming from the Plant City area in April. We think we have developed some strong solutions to the problems of ultra southerly growing but we're not telling 😊
Thursday, March 1, 2007

8:00am to 9:00am NABC Finance Committee Meeting

9:30am to 12 Noon NABC Board Meeting

1:00pm to 6:00pm USHBC Strategic Planning Session

6:30pm to 7:30pm NABC Reception

7:30pm to 9:00pm NABC Dinner

Friday, March 2, 2007

7:30am to 10:30am USHBC Strategic Planning Session

10:30am to 11:00am USHBC Pre Meeting

12 Noon to 2:00pm USHBC Finance Committee Meeting

2:30pm to 6:30pm Concurrent Meetings:

USHBC Industry Relations Committee Meeting

USHBC Research Committee Meeting

USHBC Promotion Committee Meeting

6:30pm to 7:30pm USHBC Reception

Saturday, March 3, 2007
Thursday, March 1, 2007

1:00pm to 6:00pm- USHBC Strategic Planning Session

Topics:

- Update USHBC Strategic Plan for Next 3 Years- Presentation of Food Foresight 2007 Trends Report Identify Priority Threats and Opportunities in 2007 That Will Impact Success Review
- USHBC Vision and Core Business
- Review USHBC Strategic Priorities, Accomplishments
- Determine Key Changes Since 2003
- Identify Priority Internal Strengths and Vulnerabilities in 2007 That Impact Effectiveness
- Determine Changes/Updates for the 2010 Strategic Plan
- Determine Gaps Between 2006 and 2010 Plan
- Set Strategic Priorities to Fill the Gaps
- Determine Major Strategies Needed to Carry Out the Strategic Priorities
- Complete Final 2010 Strategic Plan

Friday, March 2, 2007

7:30am to 10:30am- USHBC Strategic Planning Session

Topics: Finalization of Update Process Initiated Previous Day

10:30am to 11:00am- USHBC Pre-Meeting

Topics: Review of 2007 USHBC Spring Meeting Agenda and USHBC Strategic Plan Priorities; Discussion of Additional Areas of Concern to Cover During March 2007 Meeting; Other Business

12 Noon to 2:00pm- USHBC Finance Committee Meeting
Topics: Results of 2006 USHBC Financial Audit; Report on 2006 USHBC Domestic Crop and Import Assessment Income, Calendar Year 2007 Import Assessments Received to Date, and Update on Efforts to Collect Outstanding 2001 and 2002 Import Assessments; Review of Final 2006 Budget Expenditures and 2007 Budget Expenditures to Date, Current Cash Position and Projected Funds Available for 2007; Discussion of Revised Administration Versus Marketing Budget Allocation Percentages; Discussion of Any Changes to 2007 USHBC Budget

2:30pm to 6:30pm USHBC Committee Meetings (Held Concurrently)

**USHBC Industry Relations Committee**

Topics: Discussion of Revised Nomination Procedure to be Conducted by Industry Relations Committee and Review of Updated Election Timelines; USHBC 2007 Election Update for State and Handler Members Seated January 2008 (Discussion and Recommendation of Handler Nominees); Updates on USHBC Meeting Sites and Revised Fall Meeting Dates; Discussion of International Blueberry Acreage Survey Proposal; USHBC Crisis Plan Update and Discussion of “Trial Run” of Plan; Discussion of Procedure to Screen and Evaluate Requests for Seminar and Grower Meeting Sponsorships, Establishment of Funding Levels; Consideration of Sponsorship of July 2008 International Vaccinium Conference; Discussion on How to Publicize Organic Assessment Exemption and Plan of Action to Encourage Organic Growers to Participate in USHBC

**USHBC Research Committee**

Topics: Research Committee Activity Updates (Standardized Product for NIST, Berry Nutraceutical Symposium 2007 Update, USHBC Research Study Progress Reports and Final Reports); Review of 2007 Research Budget and Funds Committed to Date; Review of 2007 USHBC Research Proposals; Study Selection(s) and Finalization of 2007 Research Budget; Discussion of USHBC Position Statement on Blueberries and Health in Light of Third Party Health Claims

**USHBC Promotion Committee**

Topics: Market Promotion Activity Updates for 2006 and 2007 (Consumer/Foodservice Public Relations, Food Manufacturer Publicity, Export Market Development, Magazine Advertising); Discussion of Possible Modifications and/or Additions to 2007 Market Promotion Activities Based on Final 2007 USHBC Budget Allocations; Consideration of Participation in PBH “Campaign for Children's Health”; Finalization of Recommended 2007 Market Promotion Budget; Update on Korean Fresh Blueberry Import Protocol Efforts

Note: USHBC Reception 6:30pm to 7:30pm

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**Saturday, March 3, 2007**

8:00am to 12 Noon- USHBC Council Meeting
Topics: USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Updates; Discussion of USHBC Nomination and Election Procedure for Importer, Exporter, Handler and Public Member and Selection of USHBC Handler Member and Alternate to be Seated January 1, 2008; USHBC 2007 Election Timeline Update for State Members to be Seated January 1, 2008 (Discussion of 3-Year Time Frame to Identify Top Production States, Discussion of Source for Production Figures--USHBC Assessment, NABC, USDA); Nomination and Selection of USHBC Chairman and Officers for 2007; USHBC 2006 Audit Report, Committee Reports and Recommendations (USHBC Finance Committee, USHBC Research Committee, USHBC Industry Relations Committee, USHBC Promotion Committee); Consideration of 2007 USHBC Budget Modifications and Finalization of 2007 Budget; Recap of Strategic Plan Next Steps; Discussion of Cooperation with WBANA (Crisis Plan, Research); Time and Place of Next Meeting

NABC ANNUAL BOARD MEETING
Thursday, March 1, 2007
9:30am to 12 Noon
Hilton Walt Disney World
1751 Hotel Plaza Blvd. , Lake Buena Vista , Florida

PRELIMINARY AGENDA (12/06)

- Call to Order- Roll Call
- Approval of Minutes from NABC Fall Board Meeting of October 5, 2006
- Crop Year 2006 Final Reports by Area Representatives
- British Columbia- Parm Bains Michigan/Indiana- Verne Rambo
- Oregon - Mark Hurst Georgia /Southern States- Allen Miles
- Washington- Dorothy Anderson Quebec /Lowbush- John Senneville
- New Jersey- Tim Wetherbee
- Approval of New Grower Member and Associate Member Applicants and an Update Concerning Discontinued NABC Memberships
- Legislative Representation and NABC Legislative Committee Update
- Immigration, Farm Bill, New Senate/Congress - Bob Redding
- Washington D.C. March 2007 “Fly-In” Meeting Topics and Goals
- National Berry Crops Initiative (NBCI) Update
- Discussion of Potential Cooperation with WBANA (Crisis Plan, Research)
- Introduction of NABC Officers for 2007 to 2009 Term
- Other Business

Note: NABC Reception and Dinner begin at 6:30 pm Thursday evening.
FBGA Membership Dues

The beginning of the new calendar year is also the beginning of the FBGA membership year. Many of our members are not up-to-date on their membership dues. Please look at the address label on this newsletter. If the year in parenthesis is 2006, or less, then you need to renew your membership. For information on how to calculate and pay your dues, please refer to the enclosed invoice or the back of this newsletter. Your membership and participation in our activities is greatly appreciated!
Please note that FBGA's current mailing address is:

Florida Blueberry Growers' Association

P.O. Box 163

Island Grove, FL 32654

New Comprehensive Blueberry Book

Blueberries: for Growers, Gardeners, Promoters – A comprehensive reference book on worldwide blueberry production. $50 + $6 postage and handling.

Contact:
Dr. Norman F. Childers
3906 N.W. 31st Place
Gainesville, FL 32606
Ph: (888) 501-5653; (352) 372-5077
E-mail: Norm1029@aol.com

BLUEBERRY PRODUCTS AND SERVICES


Blueberry Plants. High-quality, heavily-rooted, blueberry plants in one gallon containers. One or thousands, for price and availability call 813-244-5877. Sun-Robin Horticulture 14923 CR39, Lithia. Lic. No. 47236647
**Bob's Blueberry Farm and Nursery.** West Pasco County. (727)863-4214 or toll free (888) 654-4214. Year around plant sales, southern highbush blueberry plants, all sizes and varieties, over 40,000 on hand. Call for prices and availability. Plan ahead, have the plants you need when you need them. Lic. no. 47227344.

**Elixson Wood Products, Inc.** Pine bark - shredded, nuggets, or fines available. Ph (904) 964-6649.

**Far Reach Ranch.** Blueberry plants for sale. 30 miles North of Orlando. Jewel, Emerald, Star liners and 1 gal. Call Jerry (352) 516-7428.

**Harvest/Grading Carts and Lugs For Sale.** Two covered self-tracking harvest carts. Eight tipping grade stations per cart. $2200.00 each. 500 Ropak lugs with 10 pound capacity are also available with carts for $2.00 each. Call Chad at Brookdale Farms (813) 597-6841.

**Honey Bees for Blueberry Pollination.** We use the Buckfast strain, which pollinates at temperatures 20 cooler than other strains. Bees guaranteed for strength. $20.00 per hive. Call Robbie Bell toll free (800) 822-1558; home (863) 285-7785; mobile (863) 698-9525.

**Island Grove Ag Products.** Don't buy plants until you've talked with us. We have all varieties including new releases from the University of Florida. We grow specifically for your needs. Lic. no. 47217870. Sheri Brothers at (352) 481-5558 or berrygirl629@aol.com Website islandgroveagproducts.com.

**Jacto Sprayers/Henry Mitchem Equip.** Save time and chemical costs with a Jacto Airblast Sprayer. Jacto is the number one sprayer in the blueberry and nursery industries and has proven itself in helping productivity. For more information or a demonstration, call Kenny Mitchem at (352) 787-4109, Leesburg FL.

**Miller Blueberry Nursery.** Rt. 3, Box 5700, Palatka, FL 32177, Telephone (386) 325-7373. Let us supply your blueberry plants. All varieties. All sizes. Bare root and potted. Please call for prices. Lic. no. 04720531.

**Mixon Family Farm, Inc.** We have excellent quality blueberry plants for sale. We sell Bare Root or Rooted Cuttings and we have the newest releases form the University of Florida. Call Jerry Mixon (863) 439-8335 for price and availability. License no. 472255191.

**ROPAK** Berry Lugs, Boxes, Totes & Picking Pails, Florida warehouse 1-800-776-7376.

**Smith Family Honey Comp.** Honeybee pollination service for blueberry growers. 772-633-1134 Charles.

**ADVERTISING INFORMATION**

We welcome advertising from blueberry nurseries and suppliers. The cost is 30 cents per word per issue of the newsletter in which your message appears. Send your blueberry-related message and a check payable to FLORIDA BLUEBERRY GROWERS' ASSOCIATION to our address given below under membership information. Advertisements and claims therein
MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

To join or renew your membership to the Florida Blueberry Growers Association, mail a check payable to **FLORIDA BLUEBERRY GROWERS' ASSOCIATION** to our address:

Florida Blueberry Growers' Association
P.O. Box 163
Island Grove, FL 32654

The Association annual dues depend on which membership category you fit best.

1. Regular Florida Member - $10.00 per acre of blueberries, except a minimum of $50.00 and a maximum of $200.00.

2. Out-of-state member - $50.00

3. Associate member - $100.00 (Equipment and chemical companies, etc.)

4. Educational and Research - $10.00 (University and USDA personnel who do not grow blueberries commercially)