Welcome fellow members and distinguish guests to the 129th Annual Meeting of the Florida State Horticultural Society. It is an honor and a privilege to serve as your President this year. This is a beautiful facility, I hope you can find time over the next couple of days to see old friends and colleagues and meet new ones as we embark on another successful Annual Meeting of the Florida State Horticultural Society. I, like some of you, am a multi-generational member of the Society. My grandfather, father and myself have all been members of this prestigious Society.

I would first like to acknowledge and thank the following volunteer members. This Society would not function without their service and all at no cost to the Society. Chair of the Board, Steve Sargent; Secretary and Treasurer, Lynn Barber; Co-Editors, George Fitzpatrick and Mary Lamberts; Marketing Coordinator, Steve Rogers; Program Coordinator, Mercy Olmstead, and this year we have 152 oral presentations; Student Awards Coordinator, Kelly Morgan, this year with over 19 student papers; Erin Harlow, Poster Session Coordinator; and our Sectional Vice-presidents that are listed in your program. A special thanks goes out to Gene Albrigo, Coordinator of Meeting Sponsorships. Also to the University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Administration, including Dr. Saqib Mukhtar, Associate Dean for Extension, our Extension Dean, Dr. Nick Place and Dean for Research Dr. Jackie Burns, a former President of this Society. I do not think the Society membership fully realizes how important the support of University Administration for this Society is, including their continued support of in-service training. I would also like to thank Yvette Goodiel and Ed Skvarch of the Local Arrangements Committee, for all of the plants you will see during our Annual Meeting.

As President, I feel it is important to provide our membership with a state of the Society. I will start off by mentioning membership and meeting attendance. Membership numbers have remained relatively stable over the past seven years with 236 members for 2015. Meeting attendance in 2015 was 190, and this also has remained stable since 2009. This year, at the time of my address, registration is at 203 for this year’s meeting. We have recently made efforts to enhance the stature of the Society with our new publication arrangements. It is hoped that this will encourage an increase in new members.

On the financial side, expenses have been steadily rising since 2009, and in the last few years they have leveled off. During this same time period, revenues have remained relatively flat. In the near future, I see two potential issues that could be furthered evaluated: on the expense side, the costs associated with our Annual Meeting and on the revenue side, page charges. On the latter, the Board of Directors has begun to evaluate potential adjustments for the future. Financially, I would expect that small adjustments will need to be made in the future to bring our finances into balance. I believe that the Board of Directors will carefully examine and implement solutions to these issues after considerable deliberation. To provide you a perspective, the annual average budget deficit over the past seven years is about $15 per member per year, something that can be addressed with relative ease by your Board of Directors.

Recognition of our authors and membership are issues that the Society has started to enhance. In order to continue to acquire the best and latest in horticultural research, the Board and our Society have begun to address benefits to our authors. At the 2014 Annual Business Meeting, the following was brought up for discussion: “Call the Proceedings”, a Journal that would be published numerous times during the year based on need. Start a Journal of FSHS in an effort to increase the exposure of the work of our Society authors by leveraging abstracting services in akin to creating impact ratings, in an effort to provide more academic bang for the buck.

To address these issues we have an agreement with the American Society of Horticultural Science (ASHS) on republishing our member’s refereed papers. Authors now have the choice to publish in any one of the three ASHS publications. This provides recognition by an established Journal and these manuscripts can then be reprinted in the Proceedings of the Society (as a refereed publication). Authors also have the opportunity to present orally, previously or “in press” published work with this current arrangement, which was started in 2015.

We have added our Proceedings to the University of Florida Library systems, Florida Online Journal System website. This addition allows for abstracting services to more easily locate manuscripts published by our Society. This will continue to enhance the exposure of FSHS authors and manuscripts. We are in
the process of indexing and uploading the past 15 years’ worth of the *Proceedings*, back to the year 2000. The balance of older volumes will continue to be available on our FSHS website. As new volumes become available, they will be added to the Florida Online Journal and FSHS websites. In the future the Florida Online Journals, specifically the Open Journal System, could be a vehicle to streamline our editorial processes, and eventually lead to our ability to publish our *Proceedings* in-house as a digital publication. Doing this could potentially reduce some expenses associated with the production of the *Proceedings*.

What do I see in FSHS? As an entity FSHS is evolving into a modern, responsive scientific horticultural society. Meaning, as we evolve and in the future, there will be additional changes coming, and we will need to consider these or we potentially run the risk of becoming irrelevant. Today, I see us currently making some of these changes. I believe our responsibility as members of the Society is to further strengthen our impact by continuing to demonstrate the value of what FSHS membership offers beyond a publication citation. Specifically, our Society offers members the expertise to put their science into practice. Point being, an impact number does not indicate practical application, although it is a necessary component of having a successful academic career. What is impact of new scientific technology sitting on a library shelf with the idea that someone may come by and use it or that a web search engine will find it. Now how does this contribute to, since I am from the University of Florida, the gator or greater good of society in general? Our Society is an instrument of change that strives to enhance the value of the printed manuscript, along with the reputation of our member authors beyond just an impact rating. As a horticultural society, we do bridge that gap for our member authors. Today and likely in the future, federal granting agencies will require an extension outreach component. Our Society can be a professional opportunity where researchers can connect with the extension expertise needed to secure these types of funding, along with the forum at our Annual Meeting, to deliver the results. We need to share a broad vision that merely publishing in a Journal should not be the end of the game. Seeing these discoveries put into practice should be the true test of a Society and the publication that supports it. I believe our Society offers this to our authors and members.

In conclusion I, like many of our members, lived the writings of FSHS; some of us harder than others. In the 1950s, Howell Waverly and Dr. Ziegler at the University of Florida, wrote on the benefits of sprinkler pipe irrigation for Florida citrus. I remember coming home from school in the afternoon to pull the cranking rope on an old Wisconsin engined irrigation pump connected to that sprinkler pipe system. Once the system was running, I would have to haul pipe across rows to set up for the next irrigation run. Then in the 1960s, Dr. Koo from the University of Florida Citrus Research and Education Center wrote in our *Proceedings* about the benefits of overhead irrigation for citrus irrigation, and from this information my sprinkler pipe hauling days were thankfully over. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, microsprinkler irrigation was researched, by Dr. Parsons and his associates, as not only a method for irrigation, but also citrus cold protection and again, our irrigation system changed from overhead to microsprinkler. So, one can see how this Society and the *Proceedings* altered the way citrus irrigation was done from my grandfather, to my father, to myself, all members of the Florida State Horticultural Society.

I would again like to thank all of those that have offered their support and guidance throughout my service to this Society. And lastly, I would like to convey my best wishes to all of you for a productive and successful 129th Annual Meeting of the Florida State Horticultural Society.