

2018 PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Once Again, FSHS Remains True to Its Roots and Values in a Changing World



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Welcome to the 131st meeting of the Florida State Horticulture Society. Before I get into thanking all those who have made this meeting possible and share a few thoughts on what I learned this year, I want to briefly look back and reflect on these 131 years of horticulture in Florida.

Looking for information on the history of horticulture in Florida is like looking for the history of Florida itself. While a few trust-worthy sources exist, the FSHS website has a wealth of information—through the *Proceedings* posted there—all the issues of the *Proceedings*. We need to thank past-president Mark Ritenour for having the foresight to digitize the entire collection of FSHS Proceedings and making them available on the fshs.org website nearly 10 years ago. I also want to thank past-president Ed Exteberria for walking us through the history of FSHS with his reviews of all the Proceedings a few years ago. In doing so, he gave us an informative timeline on how the Proceedings and the society were keeping up with the changing times.

Let's go back to the year when FSHS was created ... about 131 years ago. The state of Florida was founded in 1845 and Florida's population was estimated at 1.1 million (today it is 20.3 million). The University of Florida was established in 1853. Henry Flagler arrived in Jacksonville in 1878. The railroad built by the Florida East Coast Railway reached Palm Beach in 1894 and Key West in 1912. The east coast railroad opened Florida to the first tourists and allowed for the shipping of horticultural products up North. So, when did FSHS start? The idea of FSHS was finalized on 18 April 1888 in Ocala, FL when nurserymen met to discuss a horticulture society for Florida. At that time, there was no interstate, a few tractors and lots of mosquitoes! At that time, counties like Citrus, Pasco, Desoto, Lake, Osceola, Putnam, Columbia, Taylor, and Brevard were "gained" (they were carved out of existing counties). At that time, Florida only had three counties south of Lake Okeechobee: Lee, Monroe, and Dade. As Florida was developing, the horticulture in the state expanded. Throughout the years, Florida has changed and FSHS has changed with it—to remain relevant.

What has not changed is the purpose of the society. "Article III. Purposes" of the FSHS bylaws, establishes that the Society's roles are to a) disseminate information about Florida horticulture; b) create and publish the proceedings; c) advance and develop of horticulture in the State of Florida; and d) operate exclusively as a charitable organization. What has not changed either is the opportunity it creates for horticulturists to get together, train the next generation of scientists, share our work, and generate new ideas. In the early years, the members of the Society were mostly growers and agricultural suppliers. Today, members of the Society are mostly researchers, extension agents, and students.

This year again, the operation of the Society required the hard work and dedication of many volunteer members.

There were many volunteers who served the Society this year. First is the board of directors: Chairman-of-the-Board—Mark Ritenour; President-elect—Gene McAvoy; and Secretary/Treasurer—Jamie Burrow. Serving as Section Vice Presidents: Citrus—Ute Albrecht; Krome Memorial Institute—Jonathan Crane; Natural Resources—Lloyd Singleton; Ornamental, Garden, and Landscape—Terra Freeman; Handling & Processing—Christina Dorado; and Vegetable—Qingren Wang. *Proceedings* co-editors—Mary Lamberts and George Fitzpatrick; Program Coordinator—Cami Esmel McAvoy; Members at Large—Cecilia Nunez and Eric Waldo; and Marketing Coordinator/Webmaster—Steve Rogers). The second group is comprised of Local Arrangements Coordinators Michael Orfanedes, Henry Mayer, and Josh Brott; Sponsorship Coordinators Gene Albrigo and Gene McAvoy; Student Competitions Coordinator Kelly Morgan; CEU Coordinator Cami Esmel McAvoy; Poster Session Coordinator Daniel Leonard; and *FSHS Newsletter* Team Leaders Tatiana Sanchez and Mark Ritenour.

The third group encompasses chairs and members of president-appointed committees: Nominating Committee, chaired by Richard Tyson; Best Paper Committee, with chairs for each section: Citrus—Tripti Vashisth, Handling & Processing—Amy Simonne, Krome—Jeff Williamson, Natural Resources—Lisa

Hickey, Ornamental, Garden and Landscape—Matt Orwatt, and Vegetable—Matt Lollard; Presidential Gold Medal Award, chaired by Chris Miller; Presidential Industry Award, chaired by yours truly; Tomato Research Award, chaired by Steve Sargent; and Outstanding Commercial Award, chaired by Henrique Meyer. Please join me in thanking these FSHS members who served in 2017–18.

By the way, why should we serve as volunteers of FSHS? Some may do it “because it is good for me?” Who cares! Others may do it “because it makes me rich, famous and popular?” Not really! Finally, some others may do it “because it is easy?” Definitely not! So, what are true reasons to serve as volunteers for FSHS? Long-term members serve because they want to GIVE BACK to the Society. Newer members serve because they LEARN BY WATCHING and DOING. FSHS volunteers do so to MAINTAIN THE CORE VALUES of the society. In all cases, by serving we become a part of the HISTORY of FSHS and FLORIDA HORTICULTURE. So, please, consider stepping up and volunteering in the society. The Society needs all sorts of talents!

The other groups of people who have made this meeting possible include the patron members: Anne Plotto, Craig Campbell, and Arnold Shuman; our friends at ASHS: Meeting Coordinator Tracy Shawn, Member Services Coordinator Heather Hilko, and Proceedings Publisher Sylvia DeMar; UF/IFAS Administration: Extension Dean Nick Place, Research Dean and former FSHS President Jackie Burns, and Associate Dean and Agriculture Program Leader Saqib Mukhtar, and State-wide BMP Coordinator Kelly Morgan; and the co-organizers of the 2018 in-service training at FSHS, Shinsuke Agehara and Kelly Morgan. This year’s in-service training topic is “How to Conduct Successful On-farm Research/Demonstration Trials.”

Finally, I want to personally thank our sponsors: Platinum Level Sponsors >\$2,000 Citrus Research and Development Foundation and Valent BioScience; Gold Level Sponsor \$1,000–\$1,999 Yara International ASA; Silver Level Sponsor \$500–\$999 Bayer CropScience, Plant Food Systems, Chemical Dynamics and MPDI (the parent company of the on-line journal “Horticulturae”).

Again, thank you to those who have stepped up and helped the Society this year.

If you have yet to do so, I hope you will consider stepping up and volunteering too!

This year has gone by in a hurry. I would like now to share with you a few thoughts on the Society’s business.

Through board meetings, reports and discussions, I witnessed and learned the connection between day-to-day happenings in the Society and their consequences on the Society’s finances. In short, nothing is free. If you don’t pay for it, someone else must. If you do not pay now, you will have to pay later! For example, in February, the submission rate of manuscripts received by the co-editors ranged between 25% to 90% among the sections. As a reminder, authors must sign an agreement to publish—so this rate should be close to 100%. A low publication rate has scientific and financial consequences. First, it reduces the scientific quality of the Proceedings. Fewer papers means fewer opportunities to share and learn. Also, fewer papers results in fewer pages in the Proceedings. Hence, the Society faces a reduction in revenue. A one-month extension resulted in the collection of 11 additional papers, delayed the publication process of the proceedings, and the resignation of one co-editor. This was a hefty price to pay! Could this have been avoided? Maybe. Maybe following deadlines and submitting manuscript on time would help.

Another lesson I learned (or re-learned) this year is that the scientific foundation of the Society remains strong—thanks to all of you. A detailed look at the conference programs for the last five years revealed that numerically, the total number of presentations is relatively constant and ranged between 135 and 151 presentations for 2012 through 2017.

What amazed me is the variety of topics and issues that presenters selected. Of course, the bread and butter topics (plant improvement, variety testing, new crops and their potential in Florida, production practices, fertilization, irrigation, postharvest, sensory quality and analysis, plant physiology, food safety, and weed control and pest management) were often the topics of presentations. Yet, I could not help but notice issues-based topics: invasive species identification and control; bridging horticulture with family and consumer sciences and with youth; review articles; how horticulture interfaces with people, mosquitos, Master Gardener volunteers, food deserts, and new Florida residents; farmers markets, social science and biological research; food safety compliance; agritourism; organic production; solar energy; unmanned aerial vehicles; and, space culture—just to name a few. These are science-based horticultural solutions to the real problems of today. I congratulate all of you and challenge you to continue to tackle relevant, practical issues facing our industries.

I also noted special program features like tours and field trips; round tables and workshops; current trends discussions; and research and extension planning meetings. All these program topics add to the relevance of the program for members and Proceedings readers. Also, I wish we had more sessions of professional development and soft skills. Is leadership important today? Is people management important today? Did you like Dr. Sowcik’s presentation on “The critical importance of personal and professional development?” We know horticulture quite well: where do we learn the business of horticulture? I challenge the next VPs and section members to think about including some of these features into the technical program. I also challenge future Boards of Directors to include professional development sessions in the program.

Earlier in these remarks, I tried to emphasize the stability and adaptation of FSHS throughout the years. Indeed, FSHS remains the same and yet it changes all the time. One emerging issue we may be soon facing is a change in the model for the meeting. As members, we are used to go to a meeting and finding a technical program, food, and rooms all in the same hotel. As the cost of food keeps climbing in these hotels, some groups have resorted to renting space, using restaurants or caterers to provide food, and guests either stay at hotels or make their own arrangements. This model may not be possible to implement in all locations, but it represents quite a change from the current conference model. In response to changes that may profoundly affect the Society’s mode of operation, chairman-of-the-board Chris Oswald created a “Cost Reduction Task Force” two years ago. Following the implementation of some of the recommendations of this task force (see Board of Directors’ meeting minutes), chairman Mark Ritenour appointed a “Program Enhancement Task Force” and a “Business Procedures Review Task Force”. The Society needs your input and ideas; I encourage all of you to participate in this process and volunteer to serve.

In summary, I am glad to report that FSHS remains strong and relevant to us—its members and our clients. Thank you for attending this meeting and sharing your work. Talk and listen. Make new friends, cultivate old ones. Learn something, teach something. Let’s work together to make this 131st meeting another successful one.