

2021 PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS



NORIS LEDESMA

President of the Florida State Horticultural Society

Greeting's members of the Florida State Horticulture Society!

We would like to thank you for your participation in the society and for attending our annual meeting last October at Daytona Beach, Florida. I want to recognize the outstanding work of the Board head, Jeff Williamson, and all VPs, officers, and volunteers that managed despite the restrictions and challenges of COVID-19 to make a successful meeting possible. I want to express my sincere appreciation to those of you who volunteered your time and energy to participate in that capacity.

It has been a difficult year, but it's time to move forward. Horticultural production continues to be one the most important systems to meet the increasing demand of the competitive world market despite the environmental challenges faced.

The rise in demand is linked to an awareness among consumers for fruit and vegetables. It is good timing for Horticultural professionals to stand up.

The Florida State Horticulture Society, founded in 1888, is one of America's oldest horticultural societies. From our first meeting in the Ocala House, FSHS grew almost exponentially throughout the next few decades. Reading some of the articles of our devoted member, Ed Exteberria, reminds us of the evolution of our society. Our early roots were in agriculture and the Society's focus was on improving the quality of fruits, vegetables, ornamentals, and natural resources. The FSHS of today, despite all changes and challenges, comes together every year: researchers, extension educators, students, and progressive industry personnel.

The next FSHS annual meeting is scheduled for June 5, 2022, in Sarasota, and the Board is working to have different scenarios available for you. During the pandemic we have been doing more

zooming and less flying and this may continue. Perhaps this is a new way to expand the society and be able to expand our net for international researchers and students. Times are changing at an extraordinary speed; we must seriously think of expanding our horizons. We need to make some changes to move forward and become a force again in the state of Florida, and across the horticulture world. Evolution of our society must parallel the rapid changes in technology and provide the opportunity to expand our horizons. One initiative already in place is to offer a hybrid meeting for the upcoming meeting in Sarasota 2022. Conferences are increasingly being organized online, and people are getting more used to them. Even though, I believe there is truly nothing better than in person meetings to improve friendships and relationships.

There are new opportunities for partnerships where we can join with other groups of common interest. Our new alliance with the National Mango Board is just one example of many possibilities.

There are also new opportunities for financial supporters for our cause: new donors, members, corporations, and foundations are needed to keep our society functioning and to serve the horticultural sector in our state, our country, and the world.

I'm optimistic, so let's work together to promote our 135th Annual Meeting and share new initiatives. We are all privileged to work, shoulder to shoulder, in an industry whose mission is to bring people the sustenance and nutritional well-being that is embedded in what we do. After all, "horticulture" comes from the Roman words for "garden" and "cultivation." It is a noble tradition.

We are looking forward to meeting you in Sarasota!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Noris Ledesma". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.