

2008 FSHS PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

JAMES P. SYVERTSEN



James P. Syvertsen, FSHS President, 2008

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 121st annual meeting of the Florida State Horticultural Society! It has also been a pleasure to serve as this year's FSHS President and to work with the outstanding group of Board members who enable this Society to function and who are responsible for these meetings. FSHS is again meeting jointly with the Soil and Crop Science Society of Florida and shortly, you will hear from their President, Tom Obreza. Due to the preparation by the FSHS Program Coordinator, Eric Simonne and the sectional Vice Presidents, I am confident that these meetings will be better than ever. Don't worry, I usually am not a fan of Presidential Addresses so I'll be brief.

Like most FSHS Presidents before me, I consulted past Presidential Addresses in preparation for this address. Focusing on FSHS Presidential Addresses from 1990 to 2007, there have

been a number of themes in common. The expression "challenging times" occurs over and over. Apparently Florida horticulture has not been free of challenging times for the past 27 years. Frequently mentioned are challenges of population growth, environmental constraints, and urbanization that are occurring in Florida. Many past Presidents expressed optimism for positive change—change that can only be brought about if our leadership rises to the challenge. In 1991, Larry Jackson prophetically predicted that horticulture leaders would have to do a better job of addressing industry priorities through formed partnerships. He soon became the scientific advisor for the new Citrus Production Research Advisory Council (the 1991 Citrus Box Tax) that not only generated over \$1 million per year for citrus production research, but also facilitated citrus research that was responsive to industry priorities in unprecedented ways.

For over 120 years, FSHS has served its members principally through annual meetings and the publication of the *Proceedings*. In addition to being sent to members all over the world, the 2007 *Proceedings* can be found in multiple libraries in nine states and

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11 foreign countries. Using citrus as an example, the FSHS *Proceedings* can be found throughout the world wherever citrus is grown. Surely, the same can be said for vegetable and ornamental horticultural crops.

FSHS is very proud of your *Proceedings* and thanks to previous editors and the current editor, Ed Etxeberria, our publication is getting better every year. The artwork on the *Proceedings* cover and CD shows an interesting progression over the past six years that you can see on our webpage. We are looking for cover ideas for the 2008 *Proceedings* to be published in early 2009. Perhaps your horticultural art or photo can be immortalized as the next FSHS cover. More important than outward appearance, the internal content of the *Proceedings* is also noteworthy. Due to our ongoing editorial relationship with the American Society of Horticulture Science (ASHS), the format of papers in our proceedings is on par with any international scientific journal. Thanks to the Sectional Vice Presidents and editors, the content of the *Proceedings* is of great value to horticultural growers, industry people, homeowners, and researchers. Where else can you get, for example, a chronicle of Florida best management practices for vegetables and citrus? Or, where are publications on the recovery of Florida horticulture after hurricanes?

About 15 years ago, in an effort to upgrade the quality of published papers in the *Proceedings*, FSHS began making a somewhat controversial decision to develop a "Refereed" track for selected submissions that are sent out for peer review. This has now become a regular option even though only a minority of authors have chosen to follow that track. Most papers still take the conventional non-refereed track. Also, it is interesting to survey the annual Best Paper Awards where the award winning papers in each section are seldom the refereed papers. By adding the refereed track, FSHS editors hoped that the *Proceedings* could get a journal citation index as a first step towards getting a journal impact factor—a current measure of the relative importance of journals. This will not happen because, as a proceeding of a meeting, the *Proceedings* of FSHS is not an open journal and only publishes papers that are delivered by presenters at the annual meeting. Nevertheless, it is due in no small part to the FSHS refereed track that the University of Florida has for the last five years recognized the category of Refereed Proceedings in tenure and promotion packages. This at least recognizes that refereed *Proceedings* publications are ranked as category above non-refereed publications.

In years past, costs of publishing the *Proceedings* have not been self-sustaining and had to rely on other FSHS funds for printing and distribution costs. This became acute about four years ago when UF/IFAS no longer covered page charges. This loss of support from UF became an opportunity to change our page charging structure while lowering publications costs through higher formatting efficiency and electronic production and delivery. Now, the entire *Proceedings* volume is on a compact disc and costs of the *Proceedings* are self-sustaining.

Past FSHS Presidential Addresses repeated the economic

importance of horticulture in Florida and the dramatic decline in FSHS membership to the approximately 280 members that we have today. A contributing factor to this decline is that there are many organizations that compete for horticultural members. Each of these organizations provides specific needs to specialized commercial horticultural industries, growers, postharvest interests and researchers rather than trying to appeal to the broad horticultural base in the five sections of FSHS. Since we are a volunteer organization, it has not always been easy for FSHS to pursue membership fees and page charges with sufficient diligence, which further contributed to our loss of membership numbers. We have suffered losses in communication. Again, our relationship with ASHS is such that we now track and communicate with our membership so FSHS is in better financial state that we have been in years past. This organization will contribute to the maintenance of our membership roles with better bookkeeping and invoicing of delinquent members in the future.

Although I have had nothing to do with the FSHS webpage (www.fshs.org), this too is a way of maintaining communication and providing services to our membership. Our webpage was started by past President Jackie Burns, with continuing improvements by Mark Ritenour. It is now possible to search FSHS archives, pay membership dues, register for meetings, and pay page charges online through the FSHS agreement with ASHS member services. Our webpage is currently going through some major updates including the use of web-stats from those computers with enabled cookies that will facilitate future targeted improvements. By the time the 2008 *Proceedings* are published, our webpage will be better and more efficient than ever!

One of the accomplishments that I am proud of is the re-establishment of the *FSHS Newsletter*. This quarterly publication is an important means of e-mailing FSHS news to members and non-members alike, encouraging them to become members. The newsletter reviews the past meeting, makes announcements of awards, previews upcoming meeting news, and publishes deadline dates, letters to FSHS, and feature articles which promise to have something for everybody. Our newsletter is an important link between county agents, growers, industry reps, and researchers. I look forward to improvements in your FSHS newsletter.

FSHS is proud to be able to meet concurrently with the Soil and Crop Science Society of Florida (SCSSF). Over the past few years, their membership has enhanced these annual meetings with an additional section added to our five concurrent sections. I read that in 1939, SCSSF was originally formed with the intention of meeting concurrently with FSHS. Perhaps that will be a topic for our historical editor, Ed Etxeberria, in next year's meeting. What goes around, comes around. SCSSF shares a commitment with FSHS to develop student participation—our future. Look for new and better opportunities for students in FSHS.

I promised to be brief and it is time to introduce the SCSSF President, Tom Obreza, and the Keynote Speaker, the Florida Commissioner of Agriculture, Charles Bronson. Thank you for your attention and continued support of FSHS.