

## **Weather Watch Program**

### **Ryan A. Atwood**

Lake County Extension, University of Florida, Tavares, FL

Weather Watch is an extension program aimed to help agricultural producers in Central Florida protect their crops from potentially damaging freezes. This program has been on going for the past thirty-five years. Agricultural producers who subscribe for a \$100 fee receive a phone number to call for local weather forecast recordings. Multiple phone lines are used to ensure the ability to access the recordings during times of high call volume. These forecasts are updated at least daily. During warm periods it provides a 7-14 day weather outlook and citrus leaf freezing data. During cold events where the potential for damage exists weather advisories are given multiple times a day. Weather Watch program data includes predicted temperature, temperature fall, temperature duration, wind speed, wind direction, forecast tracker, citrus leaf freezing points, fruit frost station forecasts, evaporative cooling potential, and wet bulb shut off. Advisories consist of data from the National Weather Service, Florida Automated Weather Network, Wallis George Regression model numbers, and predictions from Fred Crosby a retired agricultural weather forecaster. Weather Watch subscribers who give email addresses will be notified when a freeze event is up coming so that they do not "miss" an event. Subscribers with Nextel phones are included in a weather group which allows for twenty people to listen and broadcast on the direct connect feature simultaneously. This feature gives extension agents and growers the ability to discuss temperatures and other weather conditions at their groves during a cold event. The weather watch program assists growers by evaluating climate data that could potentially have damaging effects on production.

Contact Information: Ryan A. Atwood, Lake County Extension, University of Florida, 1951 Woodlea Rd, Tavares, FL 32778, USA; Phone: 352-343-4101; Fax: 352-343-2767; Email: raatwood@ufl.edu