



2026



SOUTHERN COVER CROPS CONFERENCE

**Unlocking the Secrets of
Cover Cropping in the South**

Gainesville, Florida

February 25-26

Hilton University of Florida Conference Center
1714 SW 34th Street
Gainesville, Florida 32607

ABOUT THE COUNCIL

The Southern Cover Crops Council is a community of volunteers that help farmers adopt and improve cover crop management. A grassroots network now 10 years old, the SCCC brings together cover crop researchers, educators, practitioners, industry representative, service providers and non-governmental organizations representing all states and territories in the Southern Region.

In this time we have learned a great deal about cover cropping, our data, our farmland, our businesses, and ourselves. Much of what we've learned was because of an unexpected outcome or because we trusted our gut through that "Aha!" moment. Many among us have more years of experience than just the last decade of SCCC, and we have been building on their wisdom. This conference is time to gather all of our experiences and share them with each other. We have much to see and discuss, question, and think about. We hope this workshop-conference aids in your unlocking the secrets of cover cropping in the South.

southerncovercrops.org

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CONFERENCE AGENDA

Tuesday, February 24

 Hilton University of Florida Conference Center
1714 SW 34th Street, Gainesville, Florida 32607

1:00 - 3:00 pm	SCCC In-Person Board Meeting	Cedar
3:00 - 5:00 pm	HATCH Project Meeting	Cedar
6:00 - 8:00 pm	SCCC Board & HATCH Dinner	

Wednesday, February 25 | Workshops and Poster Session

 Hilton University of Florida Conference Center
1714 SW 34th Street, Gainesville, Florida 32607

7:00 - 8:00 am	Registration & Refreshments	Registration Desk
8:00 - 8:30 am	Welcome and Introductions Dr. Marcelo Wallau (UF/IFAS Extension Associate Program Leader for Agriculture and Horticulture) Southern Cover Crops Council Chairs	Ballroom

Breakout Session One

8:45 - 10:00 am	Regional BMPs for Cover Crops: Row Crops Regional BMPs for Cover Crops: Graziers Regional BMPs for Cover Crops: Specialty Crops Demo of Decision Support Tools Navigating Incentives	Dogwood Hickory Hawthorne Azalea Magnolia
10:00 - 10:30 am	Break with Refreshments	

Breakout Session Two

10:30 - 11:45 am	Economics of Cover Crops Unconventional Use of Cover Crops Effects of Cover Crops on Pests & Diseases What's New in Cover Crop Planting Cover Crops 101 for Farm to Market	Dogwood Hickory Hawthorne Azalea Magnolia
12:00 - 1:30 pm	Lunch: Awards & Keynote Speaker Zeb Winslow	Ballroom
1:30 - 2:00 pm	Door prize drawings at Exhibitor Area	Event Hall

Breakout Session Three

2:00 - 3:15 am	Row Crop Farmer Panel: Cover Crops Do's & Don'ts Graziers Panel: Grazing Covers Do's & Don't's Specialty Crops and Beyond Q & A Panel Role of Cover Crops in Environmental Policy Cover Crops 101 for Farm to Market	Dogwood Hickory Hawthorne Azalea Magnolia
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3:15 - 3:45 pm	Break with Refreshments	Event Hall
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Breakout Session Four

3:45 - 5:00 pm	Cover Crops and Soil Health Unconventional Use of Cover Crops Effects of Cover Crops What's New in Cover Crop Planting Economics of Cover Crops	Dogwood Hickory Hawthorne Azalea Magnolia
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5:00 - 7:00 pm	Poster Session and Networking Social	Event Hall
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Thursday, February 26 | Field Tours



Hilton University of Florida Conference Center
1714 SW 34th Street, Gainesville, Florida 32607



UF/IFAS PSREU
2556 Co Hwy 318, Citra, Florida 32113

6:30 - 7:45 am	Grab-and-Go Breakfast	Event Hall
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7:45 am	Board Buses	
8:00 am	Bus leaves for Row Crop/Graziers Farm Tour Bus leaves for Specialty Crops Farm Tour	Conference Center Entrance

8:00 am - 12:00 pm	Row Crops/Graziers Tour & Specialty Crop Tour	
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12:30 - 1:30 pm	Boxed Lunch (UF/IFAS PSREU Citra)	
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PSREU Station Tour and Demonstrations

1:30 - 5:00 pm	Rainfall Simulator Forage variety and red clover trials Row Crop cover crop rotations, compaction, infiltration Soil and Root Pit Cover Crop Variety Trials, soil moisture sensors High Tunnels with Cover Crops Pollinators with Cover Crops Alfalfa & crimson clover trials	
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5:00 - 5:30 pm	Return to Hilton UF Conference Center (Gainesville)	
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BREAKOUT SESSION SPEAKERS AND PANELISTS



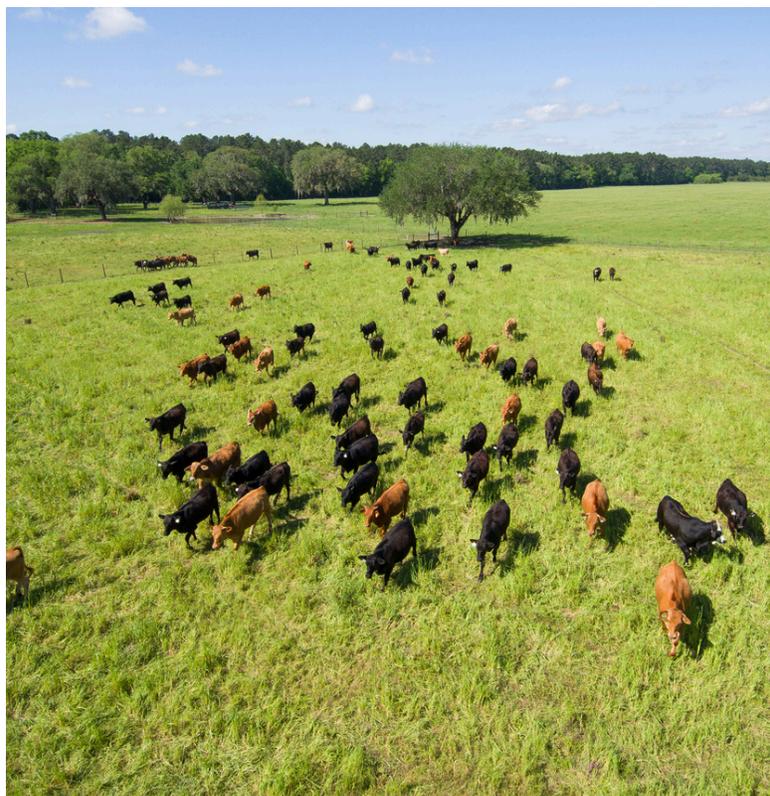
Regional BMPs for Cover Crops: Row Crops

Moderator: Dr. Virginia Sykes

Annie Dee manages a 4,000-acre row-crop farm near the Alabama-Mississippi border in western Alabama. She farms with her brother Mike, her two sons Seth and Jesse, and their families. Dee River Ranch has been featured in many state and regional publications as an innovative and modern farm that utilizes precision agriculture, energy conservation and energy alternatives. Although the farm has some cattle and timber, the main commodities are corn and soybeans.

Joel Love is a best management practices team leader and educator with University of Florida. He specializes in water conservation, soil health improvement, conservation tillage, and cover cropping.

Keith Scoggins is a USDA-NRCS Arkansas State Agronomist specializing in Soil Health. With an MS in Plant and Soil Sciences, a lot of his focus is on advocating for the use of cover crops as a best practice in sustainable farming. In 2022, Keith contributed to a study on the Yield of Cool Season Annual Grasses and Legumes in the Southern Ozarks where biomass production was compared amongst Winter Pea, Hairy Vetch, Cereal Rye, Daikon Radish, Crimson Clover, Berseem Clover, and Red Clover.



Philip Brown is the USDA-NRCS Grazing lands Specialist for the state of Georgia. He has advised for several research grants including a recent SARE funded project that concluded in 2024 focusing on allocating resources towards necessary knowledge and skills training. This project was specifically targeted at agents and farmers in the state of Georgia interested in increasing sustainable agriculture practices and improving skills for marketing and outreach. Additionally, he has contributed his knowledge to SCCC periodicals on various topics from cover crop selection for winter grazing, to planting and management of cover crop forage material and even tips for pairing herbicide with cover crops.

Regional BMPs for Cover

Crops: Graziers

Moderator: David LaMay

Dr. Leanne Dillard is an Associate Professor and Extension Specialist in the Department of Animal Sciences and the Department of Cop, Soil, and Environmental Sciences. Her research interests include the use of biostimulants, such as plant-growth promoting rhizobacteria (PGPR), in forage systems to reduce reliance on synthetic N sources. She also focuses on integrated crop-livestock systems and the effects of grazing cattle with cover crops on animal and crop performance. Her Extension program provides programs, workshops, and online resources for Alabama producers to promote economically and environmentally sustainable hay and pasture production.

Lauren Jorgensen has 30 years as a federal prosecutor in South Florida, with expertise and experience prosecuting environmental crimes. She is co-owner with her husband Frank Tobias of Starlight Farm, a 108-acre ranch in Suwannee County for the past 20 years, raising grassfed and finished beef cattle, chickens and vegetables for her own family and community. They work toward improving soil health through Adaptive Multi-Paddock (AMP) grazing of the cattle, and planting a diverse mix of cover crops. She is a two-time graduate of the Soil Health Academy, studying with Gabe Brown, Ray Archuleta, Allen Williams, Doug Peterson and Shane New.

She has been a student of the American Farmland Trust Soil Health Training Program for farmers. Starlight Farm is a member of Regenerative Farmers of America.



Austin Hamilton is the Director of Agriculture at Southern Valley Fruit and Vegetable, a woman-owned and family-operated produce company. With roots in Georgia to farms across the southeast and Mexico, his family has built a company that leads with service, grows with purpose and treats their customers like part of the family.

Regional BMPs for Cover Crops: Specialty Crops and Beyond

Moderator: Mark Bailey

Dr. Gabriel Maltais-Landry trained as an aquatic biogeochemist at Université de Montréal (B.Sc. and M.Sc.), Gabriel's work shifted towards nutrient cycling in agriculture during his Ph.D. at Stanford, which focused on the effects of cover crops and organic amendments on soil phosphorus cycling in California. This work expanded to include how nitrogen and greenhouse gas emissions are affected by manures and cover crops during his postdoc at the University of British Columbia. His work at UF now embraces the complexity and uniqueness of Florida's diverse agroecosystems. More specifically, he is interested in how cover crops and other alternative fertilization strategies can increase the sustainability of agricultural systems.

Dr. Timothy Bradford Jr. (T.J.) is a 5th generation farmer and an experienced agronomist credited with being one of the brightest and most creative minds in agriculture today. His vast experience has led him to consulting on various projects and assisting farmers across the United States, as well as lending his expertise on projects in Africa and Australia. TJ started his career in agriculture as a soil conservationist with USDA-NRCS in Mississippi, becoming a soil scientist, mapping and classifying soils in Wyoming.

After his PhD work, he developed the Precision Agriculture program at Mississippi State University. He served as the Director of Agronomy for Vayda, creating regenerative agriculture guidelines that were implemented on their Mississippi farm hub. Now, he has launched his own Bradford Agricultural Consulting company.



Demonstration of Decision Support Tools

Moderator: Dr. Chris Reberg-Horton

Austin Menker grew up in a farming community in northwest Ohio and worked on various farms during his youth. He went on to expand his knowledge of agriculture and received a bachelor's in agribusiness and applied economics as well as a master's in natural resources from Ohio State University.

Menker uses his experiences along with the research conducted by NC State University to help farmers as they adopt cover crops into their rotations.

Navigating Incentives: Flow of Funds from Program to Farm

Moderator: Dr. Kevin Korus

Amber Till is the Assistant State Conservationist for Programs – Financial Assistance with USDA NRCS in Florida. With more than 20 years of NRCS experience, she leads statewide delivery of conservation funding through programs such as EQIP and CSP, helping producers address resource concerns and strengthen agricultural resilience. She holds degrees from Humboldt State University and the University of California, Davis, with training in natural resources planning, wildland soil science, and biochemistry and molecular biology.

David Royal is the Nutrient Stewardship Project Manager for The Nature Conservancy in Florida. He grew up in a Florida farming family that stretches back six generations. Since joining The Nature Conservancy in 2014, David has been helping Florida farmers learn to manage their fertilizers, which help produce more robust crops and improve the farmers' bottom lines. He visits about 200 farms annually in his work.

Bianca Diaz Deliz currently serves as the State Resource Conservationist at the Gainesville State Office in Florida. Born and raised in Puerto Rico, she earned her bachelor's degree in animal science from the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez.

Hugh Thomas is the Executive Director of Suwannee River Water Management District. He has served in his role as executive director for over 7 years. He spent much of his early career in the environmental engineering consulting industry before joining the Tallahassee Office of Water Policy. There, a lot of his attention was spent on the agricultural aspects of North Florida and utilizing cost share programs to introduce innovative solutions to non-point source water pollution.



V. Larkin Martin manages Martin Farm, a family farm in Courtland, Alabama. The farm operates on owned and rented land. Their primary crops are corn, cotton, soybeans and wheat. She is also Chairman of the Board of Servico, a cotton ginning and agricultural services business located in Courtland, Director of the American Farmland Trust and a Director of Red Sea Ag, an agriculture technology company focused on heat resilience. In addition to her farming responsibilities, Ms. Martin holds and has held several positions off the farm. She is a Director of The Soil Health Institute based in Cary, NC. Current non-farm responsibilities include serving as a Director of Rayonier Inc. (RYN) a timberland REIT based in Jacksonville, FL and Truxton Trust, a private bank and trust company in Nashville, TN.

Economics of Cover Crops in the Southern Region: Life Beyond Incentives

Moderator: Dr. Kevin Athearn

Dr. Robert Ellis joined AFT in October of 2023 as part of the Water Initiative's economic team, working primarily on soil health economics and production systems. Robert grew up in North Carolina on his family's row crop and livestock operation. He holds a doctorate in Agricultural Economics from the University of Kentucky, where his research focused on farm machinery and tile drainage systems, as well as the integration of farm practices and providing decision tools for producers. He also has an M.S. in Agricultural Economics from the University of Kentucky and a B.S. in Agricultural Business and Economics from Auburn University. Additionally, Robert was a National Science Foundation Fellow and completed certificates in Applied Statistics and Innovations at the Nexus of Food, Energy, and Water Systems (INFEWS). Robert is now back in North Carolina with his dog Kiowa.

Dr. Wendiam Sawadgo is an Assistant Professor & Extension Economist in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology at Auburn University and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. He joined Auburn University in August of 2020, shortly after completing his PhD in economics at Iowa State University. Dr. Sawadgo's research covers topics in land economics and agricultural marketing. Much of his work has analyzed farmers' use of conservation practices that can improve soil health and enhance water quality.

Cover Crops 101 for Farm to Market

Moderator: Dr. Tatiana Sanchez-Jones

John Bitter is a first-generation farmer and founder of Frog Song Organics in eastern Alachua County, FL. He grows over 80 varieties of fruits, vegetables, and herbs and raises pork on pasture and free-range chickens. John is committed to improving soil quality by using cover crops along with other sustainable practices.

Dr. Juan Carlos (JC) Rodriguez is the Education and Outreach Specialist at Florida Organic Growers. FOG educates producers, consumers, media, institutions and governments about the benefits of organic and sustainable agriculture, presenting at tours, conferences, workshops, classes and other educational opportunities. Topics include but not limited to organic and sustainable farming practices, local food systems, Farm Bill opportunities, certification options, marketing, and opportunities and challenges in the organic marketplace.

Role of Cover Crops in Environmental Policy

Moderator: Dr. Hardeep Singh

Robert (Bob) Hochmuth serves as the Center Director for the UF/IFAS North Florida Research & Education Center - Suwannee Valley as well as a Regional Specialized Extension Agent for commercial vegetable crops serving the Northeast Extension District of Florida. Bob serves both greenhouse and field vegetable growers. Bob has developed and implemented Extension programs in a wide variety of areas including: plastic mulch and drip irrigation culture, alternative specialty vegetable crops, nutrient management, adopting, best management practices (BMPs), integrated pest management (IPM) and whole farm IPM strategies, farm food safety and Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs), greenhouse vegetable production, protected ag and hydroponic systems, and small farms and alternative enterprises. Bob also serves as a primary UF/IFAS contact with the Florida Watermelon Association.

Robert Waring is a Nutrient Management Specialist and the Senior Conservation Specialist at Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. He is co-owner of Brandon Farms in Dunnsville, VA, where he has utilized cover crops for years. He has been an appointed member of the Essex County Ag and Forestry Advisory Board, participated in an American Farmland Trust Case Study and yearly cover crop and seed test plots with Extension and Soil and Water Conservation District studies. He describes himself as a return-on-investment (ROI) kind of guy. With the tenuous, volatile nature of farming, Bob is constantly evaluating Brandon Farms' cropping system as a whole and looking for sound input reduction strategies. Over the past fifteen years, Bob has focused on growing his fertilizer (nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium) and farm profitability through timely cover crop mixtures and management. Hairy vetch and black oats have worked well in his corn and soybean rotations and helped Brandon Farms dramatically reduce fertilizer and pesticide costs.



Dr. Virginia Sykes has Extension and research responsibility for the University of Tennessee variety testing program and field crop agroecology. Her current work focuses on improving methodology and data delivery in variety evaluation and determining best management practices to optimize economic and environmental benefits of conservation agriculture practices such as cover crops, crop rotations, inter-cropping, and intermediate bioenergy crops.

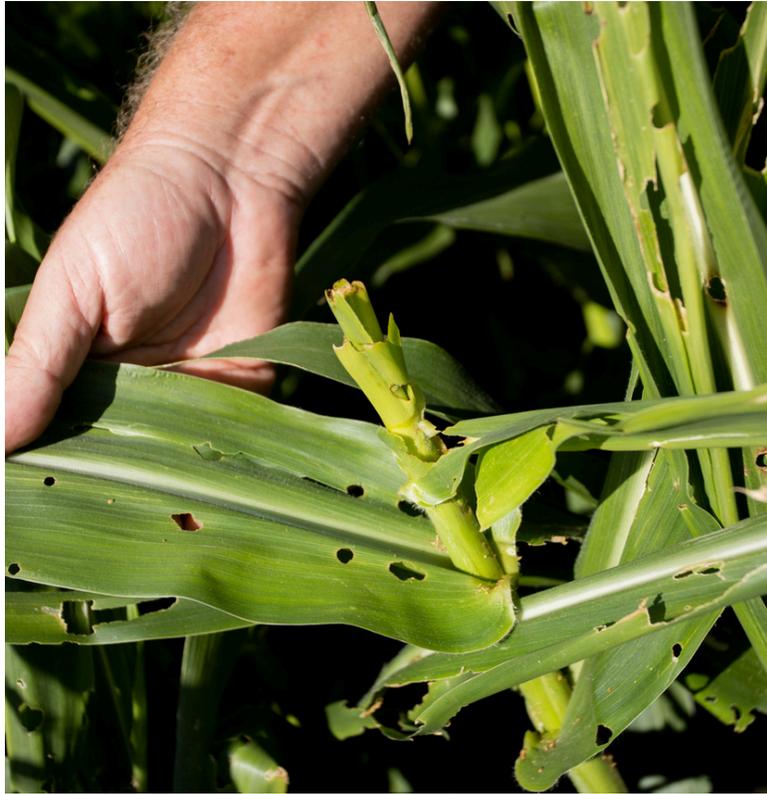
What's New in Cover Crop Planting?

Moderator: Mark Kopecky and Raymond Balaguer Barbosa

Herb Young spent his entire 40-year career in the agricultural chemicals industry but prior to planting his own citrus grove in retirement, he discovered the emerging science that is regenerative agriculture. Herb spends full time in the grove testing every idea that comes to mind and nursing trees into production.

Dr. Marcelo Wallau collaborates with colleagues from many disciplines including soil science, animal science and natural resources. Coming from a farming background in southern Brazil, Dr. Wallau's interests are in the big picture of the production systems. He is searching for science-based solutions for challenging problems faced by farmers. As the Forage Extension Specialist, he helps farmers and Extension faculty throughout the state to improve forage production and management for their beef cattle, dairy cattle and horses. He specializes in improving the production and economic viability of forage-livestock systems.

Jonathan Rupert has spent the last 30+ years growing long-standing B2B relationships in the seed industry, learning and being able to share what he has learned from and with industry colleagues, customers, researchers and educators. He has especially enjoyed providing the best possible service, sharing his passion for amplifying unique characteristics of varietal genetics, and being one of front line representatives of a great company in an industry most folks don't know even exists, let alone the complexity of what it takes to bring a bag of lawn seed to market. In tandem with helping distributors succeed in their businesses, bringing new products to market is nearly equally rewarding.



Rebecca Barocco is originally from Northwest Arkansas and received a bachelor's degree in Horticulture at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. She was awarded a USDA NIFA National Needs Fellowship to pursue a doctoral degree in Plant Medicine at the University of Florida which she received in 2016. She stayed with the University of Florida as a postdoc and is now an agricultural scientist in the Plant Pathology Department at the North Florida Research and Education Center in Quincy. She is currently pursuing a PhD in plant pathology on disease modeling and how winter field management practices including cereal cover crops affect the epidemiology of peanut leaf spot diseases.

Effects of Cover Crops: Benefits & Trade-Offs

Moderator: Ethan Carter

Dr. Oscar Liburd is developing environmentally sound insect pest management programs in fruit and vegetable systems for Florida and the southeastern US. Areas of expertise include management of thrips, midges, mites, whiteflies, aphids, scale insects, flea beetles, mealybugs, lepidopteran pests and fruit flies. The laboratory also develops and updates educational materials, and pest management recommendations targeting growers, agribusiness, and crop consultants.

Dr. Bill Burdine was an Extension Agronomy Specialist with Mississippi State University and interim research leader of the NMREC Agronomy Unit. Over his 33-year career, some achievements included: cover crop research and demonstrations, modifying soil fertility recommendations, nematode management, and developing statewide 4-H Agronomy Projects. He has been nationally recognized for his work and publications on cover crops and 4-H Agronomy. His awards include Extension Teamwork Award, Outstanding Youth Programming Award, Outstanding Ag Award, and the Superior Service Award. He co-developed a career expo that reaches every high school youth in Northeast MS. Public service activities include President-National Association of County Agricultural Agents, President- MS Chapter for American Society of Agronomy, President- MS Association of County Agricultural Agents, and Chair-North MS Producer Advisory Council. He has served on the National Board for Joint Council of Extension Professionals and on the Southern Cover Crop Council. Dr. Burdine retired in July of 2025.



Zane Quincey is the co-owner and operator of 800 acre Quincey Farms in Brenton, Florida. Quincey and his brother keep a large rotation that includes cash crops, horticulture, turf, forage material and cattle. In 2024 the Florida Farm Bureau recognized Quincey Farms for exercising outstanding Best Management Practices in sustainable agriculture. One of their BMP's includes the use of Sweet Blue Lupin that has proven to serve as an exception cover crop in rotation with corn.

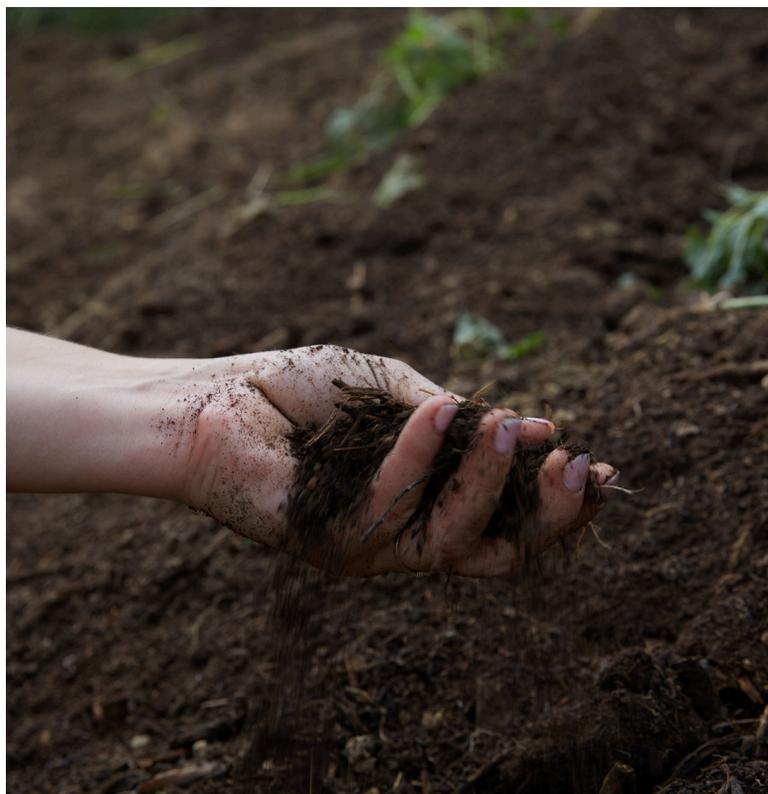
Unconventional Use of Cover Crops

Moderator: Dr. David Campbell

Dr. Davie Kadyampakeni is from Malawi, where he earned a BS in Agricultural Engineering and MS in Agronomy. He came to the University of Florida for his PhD in Soil and Water Science. Now an associate professor, his Water & Nutrient Management Lab UF CREC includes postdoctoral associates, graduate students, and undergraduates (including visiting international students) who work on developing and implementing sustainable strategies that optimize water management for citrus production, conservation of water, and water quality, among other things, at the UF IFAS Citrus Research and Education Center.

Dr. Zachary Brym represents the Department of Agronomy at the University of Florida's Tropical Research and Education Center (TREC) in Homestead. He holds a Ph.D. in ecology from Utah State University with specialization in crop physiology and computational biology. His research and extension program explores how production systems can remain profitable while conserving natural resources and protecting the environment. His projects focus on the role of biodiversity and scale in agroecosystems, the distribution and management of invasive plant and pest species, and the impacts of management practices on crop production and environmental conservation. His work recommends data-supported adaptive management practices across commodities to address local and regional challenges to crop production.

Mark Warren is a county Extension director and Extension agent III for Levy County, assisting commercial producers from a wide range of farming interests to help them find solutions to their production challenges.



Dr. Jehangir "Jango" H. Bhadha is Associate Professor, Soil, Water, and Ecosystem Sciences with a specialty in Soil, water, and nutrient management. His research program focuses on promoting sustainable agricultural practices in and around the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA). One of the major concerns in the EAA is soil loss due to oxidation, locally referred to as "soil subsidence". His goal is to identify agricultural options such as crop rotation and biochar that can add years to the productive life of a farmland. Farming practices have long been mindful of nutrient management as it relates to sufficiency and efficiency of nutrient utilization. His research program also explores the use of locally derived organic feedstocks and aquatic vegetation as an alternative source of slow-release fertilizer when applied on depleted soils.

Cover Crops and Soil Health

Moderator: Dr. Jay Capasso

Mark Kopecky is a Regional Soil Health Specialist with the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, helping farmers and NRCS staff in the southeastern states and the Caribbean Area to help improve the understanding and application of soil health management practices. Mark earned his BS and MS degrees in soil science from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls and Madison, respectively, and completed a postgraduate program in sustainable agroecosystems through the University of Florida. After completing graduate school, he spent over 24 years as an agriculture and natural resources agent and extension professor with the University of Wisconsin-Extension, and the 7 years as the soils agronomist for Organic Valley, working with farmers in 36 states across the country. Mark came back to NRCS in 2020, when he accepted the position of NRCS state agronomist for New Mexico and has worked in his current position since 2021. Mark and his wife Linda live in Florida, where they operate a small organic pastured poultry farm. In Wisconsin, he and his family operated a small organic dairy farm in the north central part of the state. Mark and Linda enjoy hiking, gardening, studying nature, and working on their Florida farm and on Mark's family woodland property in Wisconsin.

Kirk Brock farms 1,000 acres of corn, soybeans and peanuts for candy in Jefferson County, FL, near the Georgia-Florida line. He uses no-till on all of the acreage and grows multiple cover crops, particularly high-residue rye to create big biomass.



Keith Scoggins is a USDA-NRCS Arkansas State Agronomist specializing in Soil Health. With an MS in Plant and Soil Sciences, a lot of his focus is on advocating for the use of cover crops as a best practice in sustainable farming. In 2022, Keith contributed to a study on the Yield of Cool Season Annual Grasses and Legumes in the Southern Ozarks where biomass production was compared amongst Winter Pea, Hairy Vetch, Cereal Rye, Daikon Radish, Crimson Clover, Berseem Clover, and Red Clover.

Zeb Winslow is a 5th generation farmer from Scotland Neck, North Carolina, who started his soil health journey by taking lessons from his dad when he began growing cotton using a strip till system after working with the Fishing Creek Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) in the late 1990's. This system incorporated a cereal grain cover crop, which was terminated early to keep it from growing too tall. Today on his 800-acre farm, Zeb uses a diverse rotation that incorporates corn, soybeans (full season and double crop), wheat, and cotton along with no-till planting and diverse cover crop mixes.

Row Crop Producer Panel: Cover Crops Do's & Don'ts: What I Learned from Unexpected Outcomes

Moderator: Dr. Cydney Siegerman

V. Larkin Martin manages Martin Farm, a family farm in Courtland, Alabama. The farm operates on owned and rented land. Their primary crops are corn, cotton, soybeans and wheat. She is also Chairman of the Board of Servico, a cotton ginning and agricultural services business located in Courtland, Director of the American Farmland Trust and a Director of Red Sea Ag, an agriculture technology company focused on heat resilience. In addition to her farming responsibilities, Ms. Martin holds and has held several positions off the farm. She is a Director of The Soil Health Institute based in Cary, NC. Current non-farm responsibilities include serving as a Director of Rayonier Inc. (RYN) a timberland REIT based in Jacksonville, FL and Truxton Trust, a private bank and trust company in Nashville, TN.

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Graziers Panel: Grazing Covers Do's & Don'ts

Moderator: Dr. Cindy Sanders

David LaMay and his wife Christina launched LaMay Family Farms in Homer, Louisiana in 2018 as a farm-to-table meat producer to provide a source of healthy and safe beef for families. In addition to practicing pasture rotation, he began using cover crops for grazing and to improve the health of the soils in his pastures. He constantly observes and questions herd behavior, health, and the soil conditions. He studies then plants what cover crops are feasible for grazing that will also improve long term soil health in north Louisiana. He was an active farmer-participant in the testing phase of the SCCC Decision Support Tool – Cover Crop Selector Tool, offering feedback based on his dual livelihood of soil conservationist and rancher. He joined the board of the Southern Cover Crop Council in the fall of 2024. He has applied skills and knowledge learned in school, at NRCS, and at past Southern Cover Crop Conferences to raise nutrient dense, all natural beef while healing the pastures that his herds graze.

Lauren Jorgensen has 30 years as a federal prosecutor in South Florida, with expertise and experience prosecuting environmental crimes. She is co-owner with her husband Frank Tobias of Starlight Farm, a 108-acre ranch in Suwannee County for the past 20 years, raising grassfed and finished beef cattle, chickens and vegetables for her own family and community. They work toward improving soil health through Adaptive Multi-Paddock (AMP) grazing of the cattle, and planting a diverse mix of cover crops. She is a two-time graduate of the Soil Health Academy, studying with Gabe Brown, Ray Archuleta, Allen Williams, Doug Peterson and Shane New.

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Paulette Tomlinson has 20 years of experience as the Livestock Extension Agent for the UF/IFAS Extension Columbia County. She was raised on a ranch in Highlands County and is a fifth generation Floridian/cattle rancher. She has been raising cattle and helped manage a commercial cattle operation in Columbia County for the last 25 years. She received her Bachelor of Science from Auburn University and her Master of Science degree from the University of Florida with an emphasis in ruminant nutrition.

Dana Clarke runs Graziers Cottage Farm near Monticello, Florida. When she did an apprenticeship on a small, grazing dairy as a teenager, it was then that her love of cows and farms began to bloom. When her family relocated, they began a small cow-calf operation in Jefferson County. Dana continues to love the land and is passionate about regenerative farming techniques, especially managed grazing on perennial and annual forages. In addition to the commercial operation, Graziers Cottage Farm also raises a few Jersey cows that supply milk for the family's personal use. The Clarke family is honored to be named 2025 Farm Family.



Dr. Timothy Bradford Jr. (T.J.) is a 5th generation farmer and an experienced agronomist credited with being one of the brightest and most creative minds in agriculture today. His vast experience has led him to consulting on various projects and assisting farmers across the United States, as well as lending his expertise on projects in Africa and Australia. TJ started his career in agriculture as a soil conservationist with USDA-NRCS in Mississippi, becoming a soil scientist, mapping and classifying soils in Wyoming. After his Ph D work, he developed the Precision Agriculture program at Mississippi State University. He has served as the Director of Agronomy for Vayda, creating regenerative agriculture guidelines that were implemented on their Mississippi farm hub. Now, he has launched his own Bradford Agricultural Consulting company.

Specialty Crops and Beyond Panel: What I Learned from Unexpected Outcomes

Moderator: Joel Love

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MEET THE MODERATORS AND TOUR GUIDES



Dr. Kevin Athearn provides extension programs in agricultural economics. He assists farmers and food entrepreneurs with business start-up, marketing, business planning, and financial management. He collaborates on applied research projects to provide agricultural stakeholders with economic information to help guide decisions and sustain agriculture in North Florida.

Kevin is a co-leader of the Ag Entrepreneurship short course series for beginning farmers. He has contributed to Small Farms Academy, Farm2Food Accelerator, Greenhouse Training Online, Bee College, Suwannee Valley Agricultural Outlook, Agribusiness Financial Management, and Homemade Entrepreneur programs. He is an American Farmland Trust certified land access trainer. His applied research focuses on North Florida crops, including greenhouse vegetables, field vegetables, orchard crops, and agronomic crops. Research topics include (1) developing farm enterprise budgets; (2) evaluating the economics of alternative cropping systems and management practices; and (3) assessing markets for current and potential North Florida crops.



Mark Bailey is a University of Florida faculty member with degrees in Entomology, Plant Protection, and Pest Management. He serves Marion County as an extension agent and is responsible for sustainable agriculture and food systems. He has more than ten years of university extension experience and more than twenty years of agriculture and horticultural experience. A major component of his efforts is to investigate potentially sustainable and profitable alternative crops for the central Florida region.



Raymond Balaguer Barbosa is a University of Florida Extension Agent II for Suwannee County. He specializes in commercial horticulture, small farms, and natural resources.



Dr. David Campbell is the State Coordinator in the UF/IFAS Horticultural Sciences Department. David earned his PhD in Horticultural Sciences from the University of Florida. David provides strategic planning and logistical support for the statewide team with a focus on project management, on farm research, and application of innovative tools and techniques.



Dr. Jay Capasso is the Northeast Florida Regional Specialized Extension Agent focusing on water resources. He is based at the UF/IFAS North Florida Research and Education Center – Suwannee Valley in Live Oak. Jay educates stakeholders and county faculty on agricultural best management practices related to nutrient management and irrigation. Previously, he served as the row crop extension agent at UF/IFAS Extension Columbia County. Jay earned his B.S. in International Agriculture and Rural Development from Cornell University and an M.S. and Ph.D in Soil and Water Sciences from the University of Florida.



Ethan Carter is the Northwest District (NWD) Regional Crop Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Agent and he provides leadership and mentoring of Extension faculty who have row crop and restricted use pesticide responsibilities, and row crop and pesticide education to farmers. Based in Jackson County, he hosts several regional crop production meetings annually. He is also a resource for ag faculty in the 16 counties of the NW District, helping teach and coordinate educational programs pertaining to crop production and pesticide education. His specializations include peanut, cotton, corn, and soybean production as well as restricted use pesticide education.



Mark Kopecky is a Regional Soil Health Specialist with the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, helping farmers and NRCS staff in the southeastern states and the Caribbean Area to help improve the understanding and application of soil health management practices. Mark earned his BS and MS degrees in soil science from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls and Madison, respectively, and completed a postgraduate program in sustainable agroecosystems through the University of Florida. After completing graduate school, he spent over 24 years as an agriculture and natural resources agent and extension professor with the University of Wisconsin-Extension, and the 7 years as the soils agronomist for Organic Valley, working with farmers in 36 states across the country. Mark came back to NRCS in 2020, when he accepted the position of NRCS state agronomist for New Mexico and has worked in his current position since 2021. Mark and his wife Linda live in Florida, where they operate a small organic pastured poultry farm. In Wisconsin, he and his family operated a small organic dairy farm in the north central part of the state. Mark and Linda enjoy hiking, gardening, studying nature, and working on their Florida farm and on Mark's family woodland property in Wisconsin.



Dr. Kevin Korus is DPH, and the UF/IFAS Extension Alachua County Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent. He is a native of Nebraska where he received all three of my degrees; a Bachelor's in Horticulture, Master's in Plant Pathology, and in 2016 the Doctor of Plant Health. He has spent the last four years as the Coordinator of the Plant and Pest Diagnostic Clinic and an Extension Educator at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln. During this time he was able to gain experience with a wide range of agronomic, horticulture, and landscape plants and the insect, disease, and nutrient issues that they faced. He is passionate about diagnosing plant health issues and firmly believe that the correct management plan can only be developed after the correct diagnosis has been made.

He is excited to continue being an advocate of plant health and look forward to addressing the issues that will arise in the wonderfully diverse Ag and Natural Resource systems of the great state of Florida.



David LaMay and his wife Christina launched LaMay Family Farms in Homer, Louisiana in 2018 as a farm-to-table meat producer to provide a source of healthy and safe beef for families. In addition to practicing pasture rotation, he began using cover crops for grazing and to improve the health of the soils in his pastures. He constantly observes and questions herd behavior, health, and the soil conditions. He studies then plants what cover crops are feasible for grazing that will also improve long term soil health in north Louisiana. He was an active farmer-participant in the testing phase of the SCCC Decision Support Tool – Cover Crop Selector Tool, offering feedback based on his dual livelihood of soil conservationist and rancher. He joined the board of the Southern Cover Crop Council in the fall of 2024. He has applied skills and knowledge learned in school, at NRCS, and at past Southern Cover Crop Conferences to raise nutrient dense, all natural beef while healing the pastures that his herds graze.



Joel Love is a best management practices team leader and educator with University of Florida. He specializes in water conservation, soil health improvement, conservation tillage, and cover cropping.



Dr. Chris Reberg-Horton co-leads the Precision Sustainable Agriculture network consisting of on-farm and on-station experiments that operate in 25 states and over 120 locations. Chris is the Platform Director for Resilient Agricultural Systems at the Plant Sciences Initiative at NC State University where he supports teams addressing climate change, food security, and the use of new technologies for adaptive management of farms.



Dr. Tatiana Sanchez-Jones is the Commercial Horticulture Agent. She assists growers in the production of horticultural crops (vegetables, fruits, and nuts) as well as beginning farmers. She also offers educational events that enable producers and the green industry to comply with licensing and certification for pesticides and best management practices. One of the main focuses of her program is pest and disease management as well as the protection of water resources.



Dr. Cindy Sanders is the Alachua County Extension Director and Livestock Agent. Agriculture has always been an important part of her life, as a six-generation agricultural family member. She graduated from the University of Florida with a Doctorate Degree in Extension Leadership and Administration, a Master's Degree in Extension Education, and a Bachelor's in Animal Science/Agricultural Education.



Dr. Cydney Siegeman is a Postdoctoral Fellow researching the human dimensions of climate smart agricultural practices across different ecoregions along the Cotton Belt and in the state of Idaho. Cydney built on interdisciplinary training to integrate methods across the critical social sciences, the natural sciences, and performance/theatre to examine the relationships among people, technologies, and the environment. Cydney earned a B.S. Chem from the University of Michigan in 2013, then relocated to Madrid, Spain, working as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant and studied professional acting at La Escuela de Teatro La Lavandería. Cydney earned a Ph.D. in Integrative Conservation (ICON) and Anthropology from the University of Georgia in May 2024. Cydney centers equity and justice to contribute to integrative approaches toward sustainable socioecological futures.



Dr. Hardeep Singh is an Assistant Professor, Cropping System Specialist, located at the UF/IFAS West Florida Research and Education Center. His research program focuses on developing improved integrated crop fertility management tools and technologies for increasing the sustainability of cropping systems in the Southeast. Much of his work centers on nutrient mineralization and improved nutrient synchronization to increase nutrient use efficiency and reduce losses to the environment. Additionally, his work incorporates enhanced efficiency fertilizers, precision agriculture applications, crop physiological responses to fertility, and utilizing cover crops for improving soil health. Although his focus is on crop fertility, program remains responsive to critical industry needs. This necessitates research on critical topics that affect existing and novel cropping systems for the region, such as disease management, genotype evaluation, basic agronomy, phenology tracking for modeling purposes, and precision agriculture applications.



Dr. Virginia Sykes has Extension and research responsibility for the University of Tennessee variety testing program and field crop agroecology. Her current work focuses on improving methodology and data delivery in variety evaluation and determining best management practices to optimize economic and environmental benefits of conservation agriculture practices such as cover crops, crop rotations, inter-cropping, and intermediate bioenergy crops.

MEET THE KEYNOTE SPEAKER



Zeb Winslow is a 5th generation farmer from Scotland Neck, North Carolina, who started his soil health journey by taking lessons from his dad when he began growing cotton using a strip till system after working with the Fishing Creek Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) in the late 1990's. This system incorporated a cereal grain cover crop, which was terminated early to keep it from growing too tall. Today on his 800-acre farm, Zeb uses a diverse rotation that incorporates corn, soybeans (full season and double crop), wheat, and cotton along with no-till planting and diverse cover crop mixes.

ROW CROP FARM TOUR ITINERARY BUS #1

8:00 am **Depart: Hilton University of Florida Conference Center**
1714 SW 34th St. Gainesville, FL 32607

8:40 am **Stop 1: William McGehee Farm**
27317 NW 78th Ave, High Springs, FL 32643

9:35 am **Depart: McGehee Farm**

9:50 am **Stop 2: Poe Springs**
28800 NW 182nd Ave, High Springs, FL 32643

10:15 am **Depart: Poe Springs**

10:40 am **Stop 3: Wilkerson Farm**
7317 FL-47, Trenton , FL 32693
Stephen & Amanda Borek and BJ Wilkerson

11:30 am **Depart: Wilkerson Farm**

12:30 am **Stop 4: UF/IFAS Plant Science Research and Education Unit**
2556 Co Hwy 318 Citra, FL 32113
Jim Boyer, Director of Research

Lunch at 12:45 pm

1:30 pm **Station Tour**

5:00 pm **Depart: Station**

5:30 pm **Return to the Hilton Conference Gainesville**

SPECIALTY CROPS FARM TOUR ITINERARY BUS #2

8:00 am **Depart: Hilton University of Florida Conference Center**
1714 SW 34th St. Gainesville, FL 32607

8:45 am **Stop 1: Frog Song Organics**
4317 NE US Hwy 301, Hawthorne, FL 32640
John Bitter and Amy Van Scoik

10:00 am **Depart: Frog Song**

10:30 am **Stop 2: Cronos' Cradle Conserve Farm**
6311 NE 217th Pl, Citra, FL 32113

11:40 am **Depart: Cronos'**

12:00 pm **Stop 3: UF/IFAS Plant Science Research and Education Unit**
2556 Co Hwy 318, Citra, FL 32113
Jim Boyer, Director of Research

Lunch at 12:45 pm

1:30 pm **Station Tour**

5:00 pm **Depart: Station**

5:30 pm **Return to the Hilton Conference Gainesville**

UF/IFAS PSREU STATION TOUR & MAP

Parking, facilities, and lunch will take place at the #1 for both buses.

After lunch, the station trolleys will take us around the farm for in-field learning activities that will help you make the best cover crop management decisions possible!

We will board buses for our return trip to Hilton no later than 5:00 pm.

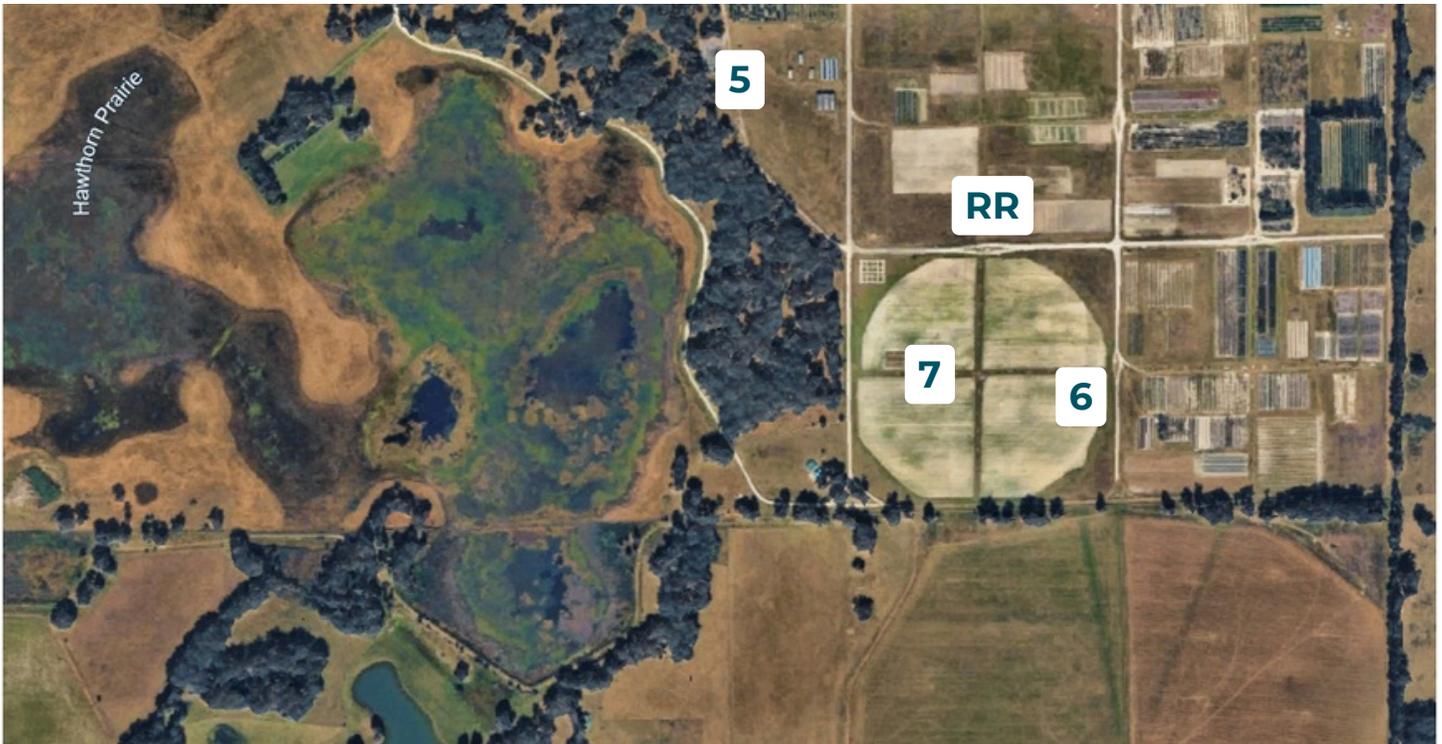
 **UF/IFAS Plant Science Research and Education Unit**
2556 West Highway 318, Citra, Florida 32113

 352-591-2678



Stop

- 1. Rainfall Simulator at the PSREU Lunch Pavillion**
Victor Guerra | NRCS FL and Biswanath Dari, NC A&T
- 2. Forage Variety and Red Clover Trial**
Esteban Rios | UF/IFAS Agronomy Department
- 3. Soil Quality Assessments Under Cover in Row Crop Systems**
Mark Kopecky | NRCS (Multi-State)
- 4. The Pit Stop-Rooting Depth**
Isabelle Giuliani | NRCS FL



Stop

- 5. Cover Cropping Under Cover of High Tunnels**
 Xin Zhao | UF/IFAS Horticultural Sciences Department
- 6. Southern Cover Crop Council Regional Cover Crop Variety Trial**
 Virginia Sykes | Univ. TN
 Gabriel Maltais-Landry, EbrahimBabaeian and Danielle Treadwell | UF/IFAS
 Rachel Stout-Evans | NRCS LA

Cover Crop Pollinators and Pests
 Rachel Mallinger, Kevin Korus, and Tatiana Sanchez-Jones | UF/IFAS
- 7. Alfalfa and Crimson Clover Variety Trial**
 Pablo Sipowicz | UF/IFAS

HILTON: UF CONFERENCE CENTER

 **Hilton University of Florida Conference Center**
 1714 SW 34th Street, Gainesville, Florida 32607

