Small Farms Academy Orchard Management Series

Linda Landrum, Robert Hochmuth, Debbie Gast, and Sarah White

University of Florida, North Florida Research and Education Center – Suwannee Valley, Live Oak, FL, USA

**Purpose**: This program was initiated to teach farmers how to successfully implement a diversified fruit and nut crop orchard as an alternative enterprise to increase cash flow on the farm. **Scope**: The educational program was developed as a series with four one-day workshops conducted in 2010 and 2011. **Methods**: Instruction was conducted as hands-on training by county and state Extension faculty in a seven acre demonstration orchard at the North Florida Research and Education Center – Suwannee Valley. Orchard crops included: cold hardy citrus, persimmon, blueberry, blackberry, muscadine grape, peach, nectarine, plum, and chestnut. Each workshop was planned to teach the cultural practices and business/marketing activities important in the orchard during that season. Topics included: establishing a planting, irrigation design, water and nutrient management, trellising, grafting, pruning, fruit thinning, freeze protection, integrated pest management, post harvest handling, packaging, marketing, cash flow, labor, and variety selection. **Results**: A total of 30 participants attended at least one of the workshops and attendance increased as the series progressed. **Conclusions**: There is great interest in learning about growing and direct marketing fruit crops to increase cash flow on small farms. As a result of this program, there will be increased availability of locally grown fruits and nuts, and producers will improve their cash flow, thus increasing long-term financial sustainability. **Recommendations**: Based on the experiences with this series, we suggest more intensive, hands-on, specialized topic courses be considered, even if the registration fees need to be higher than historically considered to cover the actual costs.

Contact Information: Linda Landrum, Regional Specialized Extension Agent, University of Florida, North Florida Research and Education Center—Suwannee Valley, 7580 CR 136 East, Live Oak, FL 32060, USA; Phone: 386-362-1725, ext. 105; Fax: 386-362-3067; Email: llandrum@ufl.edu