

SET A PICKING DATE!

It's winter and the temperatures are dropping, and citrus across the state is ripening on the trees. In this season of giving, have you ever noticed your backyard orange trees produce just too much fruit for you to eat? If that's the case, consider having the UF/IFAS Clay County Master Gardeners help by gleaning your extra fruit and giving it to charity.

Every year, the UF/IFAS Clay County Master Gardeners get their picking poles and baskets and go into the community to glean citrus for local charities. Oranges, grapefruits, tangerines, anything will work; just as long as you have extra that you are willing to share, we are willing to come pick it and distribute it. If you are interested and a resident of Clay County, contact the UF/IFAS Extension Clay County Office at **(904)284-6355** and we will have a Master Gardener contact you to schedule a date and time that works for you.

- Wayne Hobbs, UF-IFAS

- *January is the time to pick most of our citrus fruit from Navels, Satsumas, Key Limes, Grapefruit, etc. To be sure that your fruit is ready, pick a couple and taste.*

- *If they are nice and sweet, pick away, if not leave them on the tree a while longer. Citrus fruit will not ripen once picked.*

- *Once picked, wash only when ready to eat. This keeps the natural wax on the fruit and will keep it from drying out.*

- *Last days for Master Gardeners to schedule and pick: **the end of March.***

Clay Master Gardner with Citrus Harvest



Next: Get Picked!





Preparations for the Magnolia Point Homeowner:

- Decide which trees to pick if there are multiple trees and want to have some left for your use.
- If you have dogs, they should be on leash or inside the house to protect the citrus pickers.
- Arrange with the front gate or via Securitas for entry of citrus pickers.

A Master Gardner lead may contact you to arrange to check the trees to be picked, get familiar with your property, and discuss with you any issues or concerns. Program leads make an effort to group visits to the same neighborhood as much as possible, which may affect your place on the schedule; please be patient.

The volunteers normally pack the fruit in 10lb sacks, and deliver to the food pantries or senior facilities in the county on the same day.

Take Care of Your Trees:

The yield per citrus tree will vary depending upon the type of fruit tree, its age, and growing conditions: whether it has been watered and fertilized appropriately.

- Young trees should be fertilized with light but frequent doses throughout the growing season. Apply fertilizer in a three-foot-diameter circle around the tree.
- Apply the fertilizer to the entire rooting area which extends from the trunk out to several feet beyond the drip line of the tree.
- Spread the fertilizer evenly and don't ever mound it against the trunk.

For mature citrus trees fertilize three times per year: February, June, and November at the rate of one pound per year of the tree's age with a maximum of thirty pounds per year per application. A 6-6-6 or 4-6-8 citrus special with minor elements or trace elements is the recommended analysis.



- Connie Gladding, President - Clay County Master Gardeners

