

Newsletter No. 14

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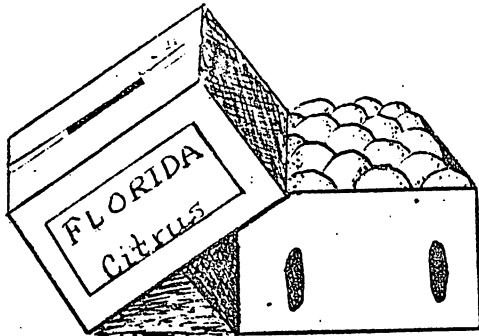
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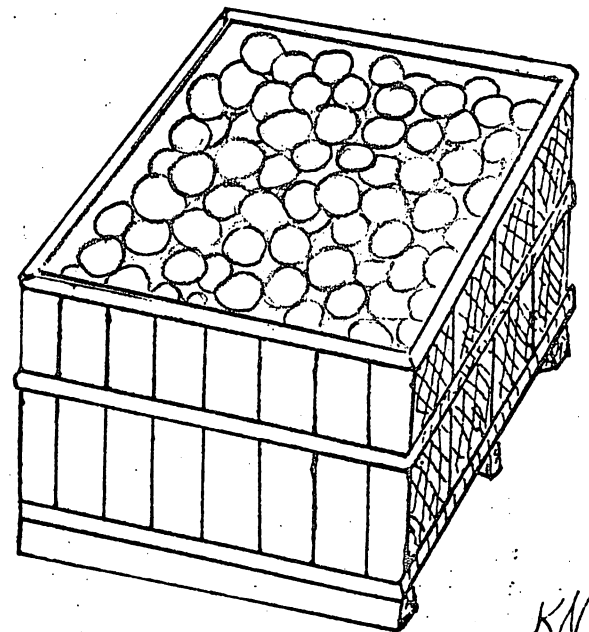
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES

and

FLORIDA CITRUS COMMISSION



# Packinghouse Newsletter



Harvesting and Handling Section  
University of Florida  
Citrus Experiment Station  
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Lake Alfred, Florida, 33850

(Complimentary to members of the Florida Fresh Citrus Shippers Association.  
Others wishing to receive this newsletter, send a dozen stamped preaddressed  
envelopes to the above address.)

## Harvesting and Handling Section

## P A C K I N G H O U S E N E W S L E T T E R

SOFT FRUIT

Dry, warm, weather combined with delay in packing after fruit is received at the packinghouse, usually results in soft fruit due to drying (dehydration). In many crops such drying causes breakdown around the stem-end of the fruit within a week of picking, a condition known as stem-end rind breakdown. This gives the fruit an 'old' look. Decay may be more than doubled at 2 weeks from the picking due to delay in handling between picking and packing, even when a fungicide is properly applied.

Rapid Handling.---Fruit for fresh use should be hauled from the grove to the packinghouse as soon as possible after picking. When received at the packinghouse, the sooner the fruit is waxed and packed in cartons, the better will be the appearance of the pack on arrival at the market.

Once moisture is lost from citrus fruit after picking, no way is known to firm it up. Always handle fruit to reduce moisture loss. A good wax application slows down moisture loss. Cartons are also helpful in reducing this moisture loss. If fruit must be held in the packinghouse before shipping, hold, where possible, as packed fruit.

Unwashed Fruit.---When it is necessary to hold unwashed fruit overnight or longer, such as over a week-end, place the fruit in a degreening room, turn on the fan and keep the humidity high (92 to 96%) with live steam. If steam is not available, hose down walls and floor occasionally. Avoid wetting fruit where possible. Do not add ethylene or heat.

These holding conditions will reduce moisture loss. Fruit will be firmer, stem-end rind breakdown and decay will be less. University of Florida Extension Circular 286 gives more detail on the control of stem-end rind breakdown.

COLD STORAGE

Citrus fruit to be held in cold storage for later sale should be high quality, mature fruit. Do not store overmature fruit. The quality at the end of the storage period will depend on:

1. The quality of fruit placed in storage.
2. Length of storage.
3. Storage conditions.

Fruit to be stored should be given a Dovicide "A" treatment. Treating time should be at least 2 minutes at room temperature. (Do not heat the treating solution).

To reduce drying of fruit during storage:

1. A good wax application is essential.
2. Pack fruit in cartons.
3. Relative humidity in the storage room should be about 85%.

Storage temperature should be 35° to 40° F.

Check stored fruit at weekly intervals for decay and evidence of dehydration. Trouble will usually show up with small sizes first. Remember, the longer citrus fruit is stored, the faster it will breakdown when placed at room temperature. It is best to hold fruit under refrigeration until it is to be consumed. Shipping of cold-stored citrus fruits in poly bags is not advised.