

## **Improving Irrigation Efficiency in Container Nurseries**

University extension agents and specialists from around the state held a workshop on improving irrigation efficiency in container nursery operations that was attended by 38 nursery growers from five counties in central Florida. Topics covered were: irrigation system uniformity and how this impacts plant growth; relationships between irrigation water quality and plant health; and potting soil particle size and how it affects the container drainage and irrigation. In addition, hands-on sessions covered the topics: testing pH of soil and irrigation water; loss of nutrients with excess irrigation; and methods to collect data on nutrient levels in containers to maximize fertilizer efficiency.

Sixty four percent of participants felt that after attending the workshop they could improve their irrigation efficiency/water quality. Also, 91% increased their knowledge about factors affecting irrigation application efficiency and how to measure for those factors and 77% of participants felt that the drip irrigation leaching demonstration helped them better grasp how much money they could potentially lose in fertilizer costs from over irrigating.

In a six month follow up survey done by IFAS extension agent Shawn Steed, 73% of the attendees at this workshop reported changing production practices to increase irrigation efficiency and reduce the potential for fertilizer leaching from their containers.