



## **#FridaysOnTheFarm: If Life Gives You Land, Grow Citrus**

From the kitchen table to the boardroom table, USDA brings people together across the nation for: healthier food, natural resources and people; a stronger agricultural industry; and economic growth, jobs and innovation.

Each Friday, meet those farmers, producers and landowners through our [#FridaysOnTheFarm](#) stories. Visit local farms, ranches, forests and resource areas where USDA customers and partners *do right and feed everyone*.

This Friday, meet Lindy Savelle who spent three years of her 32-year career in federal law enforcement in Iraq and Afghanistan and wanted to find a new passion when she returned home.

"I knew coming home from working and living in a war zone for two-plus years, I would need something to fill that void, something exciting and that would consume my energy and enthusiasm," said Lindy, who farms near Camilla, Georgia. "Citrus seemed to hit the spot."

After looking into a variety of specialty crop options ranging from olives to pomegranates, she discovered the opportunity of Georgia's emerging citrus industry.

"We felt like this citrus growing was something we could contribute to agriculture in this area," Lindy said. "We need an industry that doesn't take large acreage to make it work. The potential to bring back young family farms in Georgia through citrus growing is great."

### **A Family Affair**

Lindy sees this type of operation as unique in agriculture in terms of the opportunity for the family interaction it provides. Because of the relatively small acreages involved, she emphasizes that "this really is something a family can do together," perhaps more than other commodities. "You have the opportunity to make memories, doing things with your hands, working together on a farm," she said.

Her own sons and other family members have been involved at various levels with this new endeavor. Citrus also provides a fresh avenue for her farm to be preserved for future generations of her family.

Citrus is great for producers with other jobs, and the industry requires a relatively small investment to get started.

## A Growing Industry

The increasing number of citrus growers in Georgia has led to the need for an association. Lindy has been at the forefront of the formation of the Georgia Citrus Growers Association and serves as president.

“When we had our first annual meeting in February 2017, we had to change venues three times because there was so much interest,” she said. Georgia doubled its number of citrus trees in 2017, and growers are expecting to double that number this year, too.

With high demand currently in the market, many farmers currently needing something to diversify their operation, and an emerging grower community, Lindy emphasizes that “It’s the right time” for citrus. “It’s exploding in Georgia.”

Lindy emphasizes that the key to citrus success is for a producer to diversify across different fruits. This may include cumquats, satsumas, tangerines, grapefruit, navels, lemons, limes, and mandarins that have different bloom times. This helps mitigate any potential losses to frost.

Lindy is currently propagating three specific tree varieties for the University of Georgia as part of a breeding program to maximize cold tolerance. “The closer you get to freezing [without actually freezing], the sweeter the fruit will be.”

## USDA Support

Lindy turned to USDA’s [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) for help when she and the family launched the operation. She worked with the agency to develop a conservation plan for her property as well as financial assistance to make conservation improvements on the farm, which included a hoop house, two wells, a pipeline and specialized irrigation equipment.

The hoop house, or [seasonal high tunnel](#), is a plastic-covered structure that helps farmers lengthen the growing season. She uses the high tunnel to grow dwarf citrus, where she is growing dwarf satsumas and other varieties.

To use water wisely, Lindy installed a jet irrigation system that provides water to each specific tree. This keeps the trees well-watered and protects the trees from frost damage.



"Along the way, I realized I needed help with water quality and conservation practices, so I sought technical assistance and expertise from NRCS," Lindy said. "I am convinced that by helping me, the NRCS helped others as the citrus industry in Georgia has exponentially exploded as we share our farm and what we now know about growing this commodity in Georgia."

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