

# PASSION FRUIT: LAUNCHING AN ALTERNATIVE CROP

Mark Bailey, University of Florida IFAS Extension—Marion County—Ocala, FL 34470 ironhill@ufl.edu

## Situation

In 2021 agricultural production costs and land prices increased significantly in North Central Florida. This creates substantial challenges for new farms to begin and existing farms to expand. The need for high value crops on small acreage is increasingly important. Passion fruit is a new high value crop that has not been previously grown commercially in North Central Florida.

## Objectives

The objective is to help small farms begin, grow, and become profitable with passion fruit production. Once proven to be reliable and profitable, crop expansion to large acreage may be recommended.



Passion fruit hanging from trellis.

Photo credit: Gene Altman

## Methods

Three key components are necessary to successfully launch passion fruit as an alternative crop: establish production methods, grower adoption of the crop, and effective marketing. Two EDIS publications support current and prospective growers with the fundamentals of passion fruit production. Growers that are seeking alternative crops now have the option of passion fruit. They are provided with basic marketing options as well as passion fruit market analysis. Growers are directly supported with a recurring site visits and regular communication. A future production meeting is planned for both current and prospective growers to share the latest information and encourage two-way communication between IFAS and the growers. Grant funding is being pursued.



**UF** | **IFAS Extension**  
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

## Results

Small farms (n=10) in North Central Florida have planted passion fruit on small acreage, averaging ¼ acre, in 2021. Additional small farms are in the process of establishing passion fruit. Small farms that planted in 2021 are beginning to produce an initial crop and those that planted in 2020 have achieved profitability. Initial yield data indicates 7,000lbs (approximately 72,000 fruit) per acre is expected. Wholesale fruit sell for >\$1.00.



Ripe passion fruit from local grower.

Photo credit: Dave Jarnagin



Passion fruit cross section.

Photo credit: Mark Bailey

## Conclusions

Passion fruit is an emerging alternative crop that has significant growth potential to generate profitability for regional farms and benefit consumers with high quality Florida grown passion fruit.

Photo credit: by Mark Bailey