



69TH ANNUAL IFTA CONFERENCE AND TOURS



***INTEGRATING ORCHARD
TRADITIONS,
TECHNOLOGIES AND AI***

FEBRUARY 9-11, 2026 FRESNO, CALIFORNIA

#ifruitree

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Welcome!



I am delighted to welcome you to the 2026 International Fruit Tree Association Annual Conference and Tours in Fresno, California. This gathering is always one of the highlights of our year, and we are truly grateful for this time to reconnect with familiar faces and to get to know new members who are joining us for the first time.

Our theme this year, “Integrating Orchard Traditions, Technologies, and AI,” reflects the heart of our work. We honor the deep roots of our orchard traditions — the family histories, the lessons learned in the field, and the craftsmanship passed from generation to generation. At the same time, we embrace the excitement of innovation, from new technologies to emerging applications of artificial intelligence that are reshaping how we grow, manage, and steward our orchards. Together, these elements create a vibrant future for our industry, and this conference is the perfect place to explore that future side by side.

Fresno, situated in the rich agricultural landscape of California’s Central Valley, offers a wonderful backdrop for our time together. Our tours will take you into the heart of this region to see orchards, research, and technology in action. We are also thrilled to include a special day at the World Ag Expo in Tulare, California, where you’ll have the chance to experience one of the world’s premier agricultural shows — a place where ideas, equipment, and innovation come together in a big way.

Beyond the formal program, what truly makes IFTA special is our community. The conversations over coffee, the bus ride stories, the problem-solving in hallways and orchards — these connections strengthen us all. I encourage you to share openly, ask questions, and enjoy the fellowship that comes with being among people who understand the challenges and joys of this industry.

On behalf of the Board and the Conference Planning Committee, thank you for being part of the International Fruit Tree Association family. We can’t wait to welcome you to Fresno to spend time learning, laughing, and looking ahead together at the 2026 Annual Conference and Tours.

Warmest regards,
Kyle Ardiel
Chair, IFTA



SILENT AUCTION

BENEFITTING

**INTERNATIONAL
FRUIT TREE ASSOCIATION
RESEARCH FOUNDATION**

FARM SWAG



**AT THE ANNUAL
IFTA CONFERENCE**

**FEBRUARY 8-11, 2026
FRESNO, CALIFORNIA**

Who Are We?

Since its initial inception in 2011, IFTA Research Foundation has had the mission to allocate funds to projects around the world working to improve rootstock and growing methods for farms today and for generations to come. Recent studies have included such diverse themes as orchard design, soil health, and sustainability methods.

How Can You Help?

You can help increase the number and quality of research studies focused on advancing intensive orchard systems by donating to the IFTA Research Foundation. This can be done by:

- Donating on the website, ifruittree.org.
- Sending a check to

IFTA Research Foundation

6601 W. Deschutes Avenue, Suite C-2 Kennewick, WA 99336.

Donating to the foundation is not only a charitable act, but also an investment in your farm, the fruit tree industry, and the generations which follow.

FUNDS RAISED THIS YEAR

\$15,590

2025 DONORS

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**SAVE THE
DATES**

**IFTA 2026
Summer Tour
Hudson Valley, NY
July 19-22, 2026**

**IFTA 2027
Annual
Conference
Grand Rapids, MI
February 7-10, 2027**



CONGRATULATIONS

2026 IFTA YOUNG PROFESSIONALS SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS



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SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 8

3:00 PM IFTA Welcome Reception and Super Bowl Watch Party

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9

8:00 AM Welcome

Tree Fruit Economics

8:05 2025 Regional Round-Up, IFTA Board

8:25 North American Apple Production and Market Trends, Chris Gerlach,
US Apples, VA

8:55 Sweet Cherry Production and Market Trends, Erick Stonebarger, Stemilt-
Chinchiolo, Linden, CA

9:15 Peach and Plum Production and Market Trends, Kevin Day, University of
California Cooperative Extension

9:35 Direct Market Production Economics Picture, Reuwai Hanewald,
Terhune Orchards, NJ

9:55 Panel Q&A - Speakers and Audience

10:15 Break

Tree Fruit Production I

10:45 National Labor Update-H2A, Rates and Forecasts, Daniel Ross, Seso Labor
Management

11:10 Why is New Zealand Fascinated with Planar Orchards? Earnscy Weaver,
New Zealand

11:40 Fireblight Update (UV-C in apples, World Fireblight Conference)
Dr. Kerik Cox, Cornell

12:00 Panel Q&A - Speakers and Audience

12:15 – 1:15 Lunch



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MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9 (Cont.)

Orchard Technologies

- 1:15 Current Realities of Orchard Technologies and AI Development, Walt Duflock, Senior VP Of Innovation, Western Growers
- 1:50 WTFRC Orchard Technologies Update, Dr. Ines Hanrahan, WTFRC
- 2:15 **Robert Carlson Lecture:** Economics of the World's First All-Electric Orchard, Mike Casey, Forest Lodge Orchard, New Zealand (Remote)
- 3:00 Panel Q&A - Speakers and Audience
- 3:15 **Break**
- 3:45 AI Advances in Apple, Cherry and Stone Fruit Sorting Lines
- 4:05 The Potential for Agrivoltaics in Orchards, Dr. Stefano Musacchi, WSU Wenatchee
- 4:25 Grower Panel: Experiences with New Technologies and Their ROI
Brent Burky, Earnscy Weaver, Mike Casey, Erick Stonebarger,
Paul Cathcart, Justin Finkler
- 5:25 Panel Q&A - Speakers and Audience
- 5:45 Wrap Up

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10

7:30 AM to 5:00 PM **World Ag Expo**

Join fellow IFTA attendees for a full-day visit to the World Ag Expo. Buses will board in the hotel parking lot at 7:30 a.m. and depart promptly at 7:45 a.m. Attendees will tour the World Ag Expo at their own pace from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., allowing ample time to explore exhibits and connect with industry leaders. Return transportation will begin loading at 4:30 p.m. from Gate 12 at the World Ag Expo. Buses will depart back to the hotel as they fill.

The World Ag Expo® hosts over 1,200 exhibitors displaying cutting-edge technology and equipment on 2.6 million square feet of exhibit space. An estimated average of 100,000 individuals from over 70 countries attend World Ag Expo® each year.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11

Mitigating Climate Challenges

- 8:00 **Welcome**
- 8:05 SGMA, California's Sustainable Groundwater Management Initiative,
Tomo Kumahira / Ryo Takanashi, Stanford University

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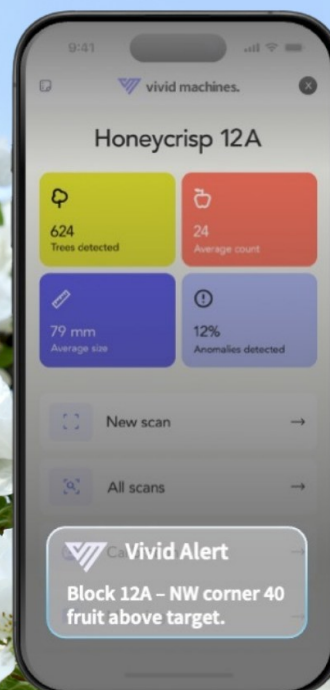
- 8:25** **Wallace Heuser Presidential Lecture:** Root Growth and Function in Orchards: Impact of Droughts, Irrigation, Rainfall, Dr. Astrid Volder, UC Davis
- 9:10** Plant-Based Irrigation to Reduce Water Use While Maintaining Yield & Quality, Dr. Kosana Suvocarev, UC Davis Biometeorology
- 9:25** WSU Smart Orchard Irrigation Tools and Experiences, Alejandra Odegard, Swan Systems
- 9:45** Panel Q&A - Speakers and Audience
- 10:00** **Break**
- 10:30** Grower Panel: Experiences with Precision Agriculture, Keith Veselka, Patrick Dorsing, Zack Ellis, Danny Klittich
- 11:15** An Integrated Approach to Improve Sweet Cherry Dormancy and Bloom, Dr. Giulia Marino, UC Davis
- 11:30** PGR Trials to Enhance Apple and Cherry Dormancy and Bloom, John Avansino, Prima Frutta Packing, Linden, CA
- 11:40** Panel Q&A - Speakers and Audience
- 11:55** IFTA Business Meeting and Awards
- 12:15-1:15** **Lunch**
- Tree Fruit Production II**
- 1:30** Apple Rootstocks to Mitigate Production Challenges, Dr. Gennaro Fazio, USDA-Geneva
- 1:50** What Can Go Wrong in High-Density Pear Orchards? Rootstock Selection, Quince Rootstock Management, and Graft Compatibility Problems, Dr. Stefano Musacchi, WSU
- 2:10** Strategies for Mitigation of Bitter Pit, Dr. Chayce Griffith, MSU
- 2:30** PGR Trials to Promote Apple Fruit Color, Dr. Poliana Francescatto, Valent BioSciences
- 2:45** Trials and Impacts of Pneumatic Apple Tree Defoliation, Dr. Lee Kalcsits, WSU
- 3:00** Panel Q&A - Speakers and Audience
- 3:20** **Break**
- 3:50** Advances in Apple Crop Load Management (PACMAN), Dr. Jon Clements, Univ. of MA
- 4:10** Advances in Cherry Crop Load Management, Dr. Jozsef Racsko, Valent BioSciences
- 4:45** Whole Orchard Recycling Strategies, Mae Culumber, UC Cooperative Extension
- 5:05** Integrating Disease Prediction Models to Improve Bitter Rot Management, Matheus Borba, Virginia Tech
- 5:15** Management of Bacterial Blast/Canker, Alejandro Hernandez, UC-Davis
- 5:30** Panel Q&A - Speakers and Audience
- 5:45** **Conference Wrap-Up** - Upcoming IFTA Study Tours and Conference

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- Accurate harvest yield & size estimates
- Fruit, blossom, & bud counts per tree
- Track bloom progression from pink to full bloom
- Fruit size & color, color coverage maps
- Fruit growth rate monitoring
- Precise tree inventory & mapping
- Canopy vigor, color, and health
- Trunk diameter & cross-sectional area measurements
- ...and much more!

SUPPORTED CROPS

- Apples
- Cherries
- Wine Grapes
- Table Grapes
- Blueberries
- Tree Nuts (Beta)
- Citrus (Beta)
- Pears (Beta)



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