



COMMISSIONER'S
Ag·ENVIRONMENTAL
LEADERSHIP AWARDS
2025





Dear Friends,

I am delighted to recognize Wish Farms and their flagship grower G&D Farms as the recipient of the 2025 Commissioner's Agricultural Environmental Leadership Award. For nearly a century the Wishnatzki family has grown an empire of sweetness from their home in Plant City, Florida, the winter-strawberry capital of the world. Through innovation and adaptation, they have managed to provide a wide variety of berries to consumers each year. Utilizing the latest in agricultural technology, they have implemented multiple strategies to measure and manage irrigation, fertigation and plant health. Their continued efforts allow them to reliably deliver strawberries, blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, and pineberries to local, national, and international markets. By prioritizing sustainable cultivation practices, Wish Farms has thoroughly demonstrated their commitment to advancing Florida agriculture.

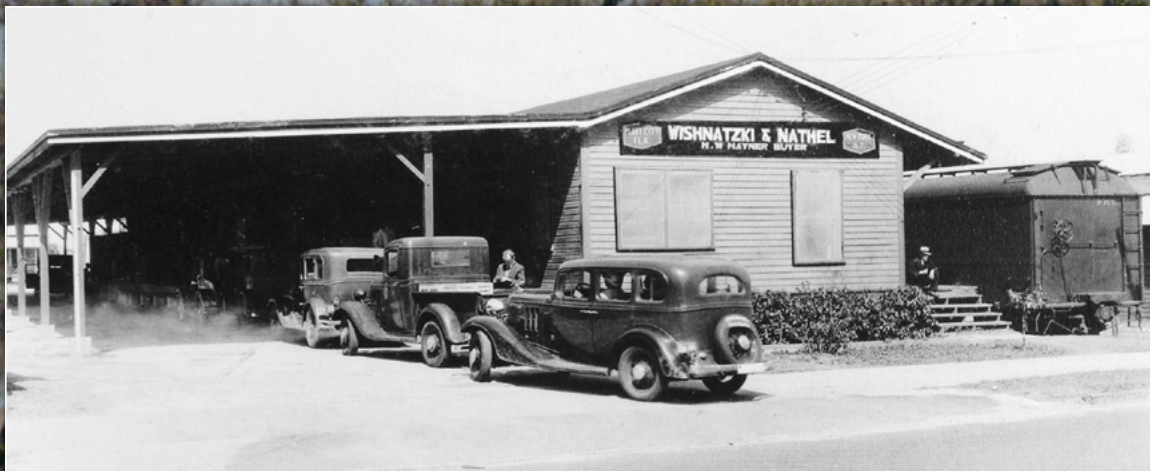
Since 1994, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services has honored agricultural leaders who demonstrate innovation and pioneer strategies to protect the environment. It is my privilege to recognize the efforts of these ecological champions, who have proven themselves dedicated to stewardship, conservation and sustainability. Their extensive contributions help to ensure the preservation of Florida's valuable natural resources and lead the way for future generations.

Sincerely,

Wilton Simpson
Commissioner of Agriculture



Located in Duette, Florida, G&D Farms began in 1987 when Gary Wishnatzki established it as a strawberry-growing venture for his company, Wish Farms. The farm's name honors its original founders—Gary's grandfather, Gershon "Harris" Wishnatzki, and his business partner, Daniel Nathel. Today, considered to be the largest contiguous strawberry farm in the world, G&D Farms continues to stay true to its roots.



The Wish Farms story begins in 1904 when 19-year-old Harris Wishnatzki immigrated from Ukraine to the United States and began selling fruit out of a pushcart in New York City. In 1929 Harris began traveling to Florida to be closer to production and the auction markets. Four generations later, his family carries on the legacy of his strong work ethic and entrepreneurial spirit at Wish Farms, one of the largest berry suppliers in the world.



In 2021, Wish Farms celebrated the grand opening of their brand new, state-of-the-art headquarters in Plant City, Florida. Today, all packing, shipping, sales and marketing of the company are managed from this facility.

Gary Wishnatzki (right), the 3rd generation owner and CEO of Wish Farms, manages the company with the help of his son Nick (left), the public relations director.



Chris Parks (left) manages the 2,400-acre G&D Farms, where a typical growing season sees the farm planted with nearly 20 million strawberry and pineberry plants. Up to 585 acres are grown conventionally, and as many as 200 acres are grown organically.



Chris Parks (left) and David Royal (right), of the Nature Conservancy, examine the latest in agricultural technology utilized by G&D Farms. Multiple strategies are implemented to measure and manage irrigation, fertigation and plant health.



Drip tubes placed under plastic ensure that water and nutrients are injected directly into the root zone, minimizing evaporation and maximizing efficiency. Tissue and soil samples, as well as soil-moisture probes, help to measure and quantify vital information.

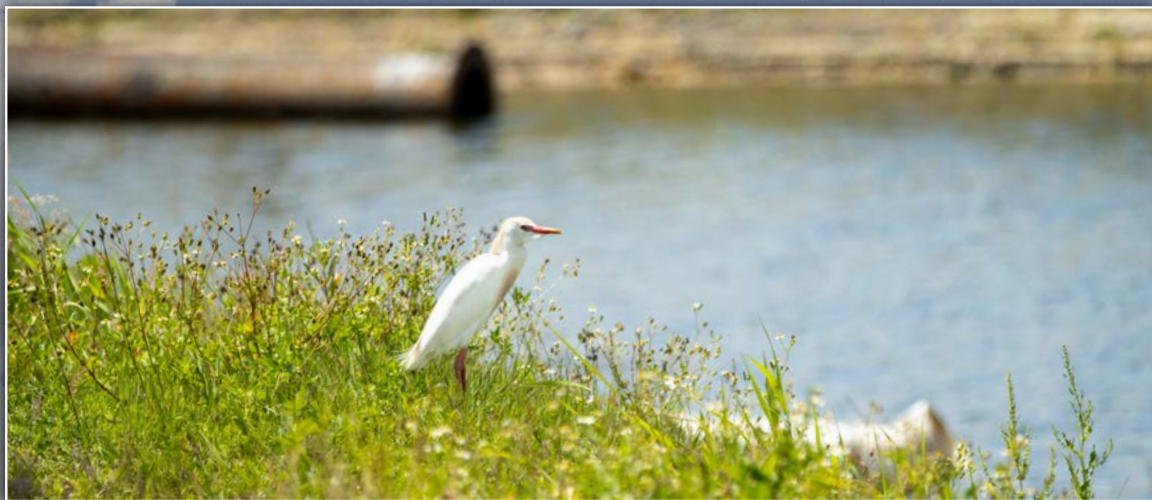
The addition of an application-based program puts critical moisture and nutrient information in the farm manager's hands, and allows for remote access and control of many farm systems.



Chris Parks (left) and Kasey Deuberry (right), of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, work together to follow the FDACS Best Management Practices, helping to protect not only the season's crop, but also Florida's water supply.



To reduce the application of traditional chemical insecticides, G&D Farms employs an Integrated Pest Management Program. The farm uses drones to release thousands of beneficial insects that naturally target and feed on plant-damaging pests.



Ditches, retention ponds and natural wetlands are used to divert, catch and filter any excess nutrients from the water before it leaves the farm, helping to protect the delicate ecosystems surrounding the farm and downstream.

A close-up photograph of a single, ripe, red strawberry. The strawberry is the central focus, showing its characteristic texture of small seeds (achenes) and a bright red color. It is surrounded by several green, serrated leaves of the strawberry plant. The background is dark and out of focus, making the strawberry stand out.

**Utilizing environmentally
friendly practices, G&D
Farms grows fresh berries
that Wish Farms distributes
to customers worldwide.**

PREVIOUS WINNERS

2024	Costa Farms – <i>Miami</i>	2016	Jones Potato Farm – <i>Manatee and Hendry</i> Cherrylake – <i>Groveland</i> Alliance Dairies – <i>Trenton</i>
2023	Rocking K Cattle Company – <i>Odessa</i> Brite Leaf Citrus Nursery – <i>Lake Panasoffkee</i> Island Grove Wine Company – <i>Hawthorne</i>	2015	Carlton and Carlton Ranch – <i>Hillsborough</i> Dasher Farm – <i>McAlpin</i> Bull Hammock Ranch – <i>Fort Pierce</i>
2022	Lee Peanut Farms – <i>Lee</i> The Groves of Peace River – <i>Zolfo Springs</i> Usher Land and Timber – <i>Chiefland</i>	2014	Agri-Starts, Inc. – <i>Apopka</i> Riverdale Potato Farm, Inc. – <i>Elkton</i> Milking R, Inc. – <i>Okeechobee</i>
2021	The Jungle Nursery – <i>Homestead</i> Tater Farms – <i>Hastings</i> Brad Turner – <i>Lithia</i>	2013	Kissimmee Park Properties, LLC – <i>St. Cloud</i> Ferris Farms – <i>Floral City</i> Farmton Tree Farm – <i>Osteen</i>
2019	Marshall Farms – <i>Baker</i> Blue Sky Farms – <i>Elkton</i> EIP Citrus Managment – <i>Polk</i>	2012	Deroose Plants, Inc. – <i>Apopka</i> Southern Accent Farm – <i>Okeechobee</i>
2018	Tree-O-Groves – <i>Lake Alfred</i> Wild Goose Farms – <i>Umatilla</i> Blackbeards Ranch – <i>Myakka City</i>	2011	Straughn Farms, LLC – <i>Waldo</i>
2017	Florida Blue Farms – <i>Waldo</i> Speedling – <i>Ruskin</i> Cindale Farms – <i>Marianna</i>	2010	Saturiwa Conservation Area – <i>Elkton</i> 3 Boys Farm – <i>Ruskin</i> Arapaho Citrus Management – <i>Fort Pierce</i>
		2009	Dairy Production Systems – <i>High Springs</i> Loop's Nursery – <i>Jacksonville</i>

2008 Carroll Brothers Nursery – *Clearwater*
Brock Family Farm – *Monticello*

2007 Butler Oaks Farm – *Lorida*
Gwinn Brothers Farm – *McAlpin*
Buck Island Ranch – *Lake Placid*
Fraleigh Nursery – *Madison*

2006 Tampa Wholesale Nursery – *Dover*
Riverview Flower Farm – *Riverview*
Lightsey Cattle Company – *Lake Wales*

2005 Kerry's Bromeliad Nursery – *Homestead*
Larson Dairy – *Okeechobee*
Richard N. Raid, Ph.D. – *Royal Palm Beach*

2004 Blue Heron Groves – *Lakeland*
M&B Products – *Tampa*
McArthur Farms – *Port St. Lucie*

2003 Williamson Cattle Company – *Okeechobee*
Sun City Tree Farm – *Ruskin*
Aquatika Tropicals – *Plant City*

2002 Holloway Irrigation Systems – *Leesburg*
Daniel A. Botts – *Orlando*
Sanwa Growers – *Wimauma*

2001 Carlton 2x4 Ranch – *Arcadia*
Barthle Brothers Ranch – *San Antonio*

2000 Pacific Tomato Growers – *Palmetto*
Evans Properties – *Vero Beach*

1999 Two Rivers Ranch – *Thonotosassa*
Lykes Bros. – *Okeechobee*
Suwannee Farms – *O'Brien*

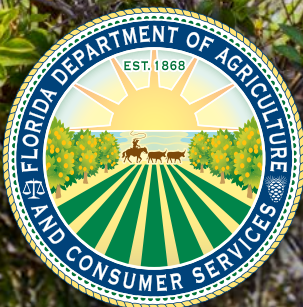
1998 Longino Ranch – *Arcadia*
V&W Farms – *Avon Park*

1997 Anclote River Ranch – *Odessa*

1996 Edward "Jack" Campbell – *Homestead*
Citrus World – *Lake Wales*
Ekkwill Waterlife Resources – *Gibsonton*

1995 Schroeder Manatee Ranch – *Bradenton*
Burt McKee – *Tampa*
Davie Dairy – *Okeechobee*
O.F. Nelson and Sons Nursery – *Apopka*
Bright Hour Ranch – *Arcadia*
Deseret Ranches of Florida – *St. Cloud*
Fulford Farms – *Monticello*





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