

Tree-T-Pee a boon to growers and conservationists

By **MARY CANNADY**
CORRESPONDENT

The benefits of the Tree-T-Pee, invented by Arcadia entrepreneur Johnny Georges, can best be described through the numbers — what things cost before the t-pee and what they cost after its use.

Citrus growers used Tree-T-Pees in a smaller version for about 20 years as a protective sheath during freezes. Georges realized that if enlarged, the t-pees could do a lot more than that, and about eight years ago, he redesigned and began marketing a bigger t-pee that could concentrate water from micro-irrigators, along with the accompanying fertilizer and herbicides, to the base of each tree, rather than covering the whole grove, including unplanted ground.

Georges is enthusiastic and confident in giving the stats. Ninety percent is a consistent, average number in the savings ratio. For example, 90 percent less water, fuel, fertilizer, and weed killer. Georges has a passion when it

comes to conserving fresh water. “Instead of using 10,000 gallons of water per tree per year without the Tree-T-Pee, with it we are now using only 800 gallons per tree per year and watering more efficiently.” Fuel cost without the t-pee is about \$1.44 per tree per year. With the t-pee it’s 12 cents per tree per year. Savings on fertilizer and herbicides also run about 90 percent, as previously noted.

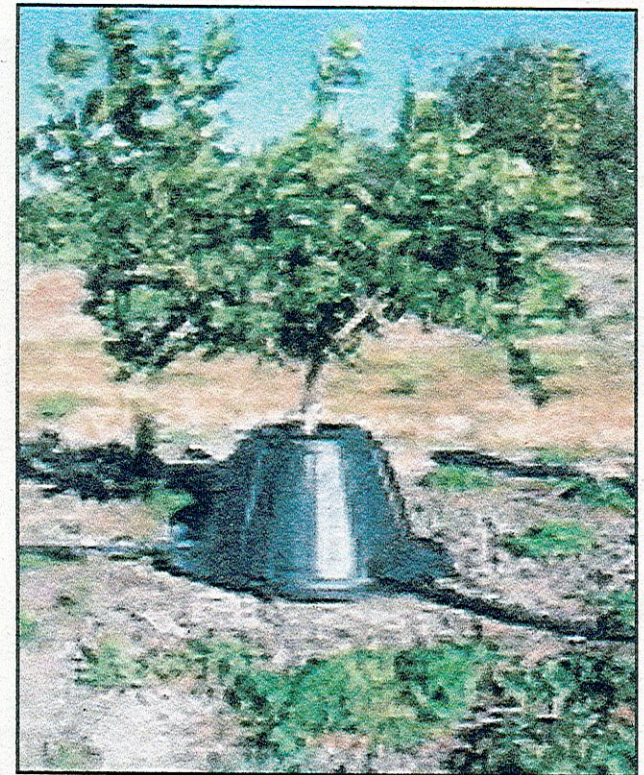
The Tree-T-Pee fits around the citrus tree’s base and acts as a small greenhouse in the field, containing water and directing it to where it is needed; the root of the tree. This results in deeper root growth and a 30-percent increase in the growth of young citrus trees. “We are also now using them on peach trees,” Georges explains, “making them in white to reflect the hot Florida sun and to keep the tree cooler. And with interest growing day by day we are now using them on jatropha trees in Felda, Florida”

The benefits to the grower are numerous: 90-percent savings during the first four years a citrus

tree is planted. For example ... During the Jan 14, 2010, freeze in Florida, temperatures dropped to 19 degrees in some areas. The trees with the Tree-T-Pees had 40+ degree temperatures at their base with steam from the 72-degree water engulfing the canopy of the young citrus trees.

The t-pees are environmentally progressive, through water-conservation; 90-percent reduction of herbicide and fertilizer runoff (a major contributor to waterway pollution); and reduction of fuel consumption. The water savings are so significant that Southwest Florida Water

Management District officials have expressed an interest in partnering with growers who use the device, in a cost-sharing program. Watering time in the groves is normally six hours, Georges says, but with the Tree-T-Pee confining the irrigation to individual trees, the watering time is cut to 30 minutes. “The water savings boggles the mind,” Georges said. He has been



A young citrus tree is ensconced in its “greenhouse,” a Tree-T-Pee, which keeps water, fertilizer and herbicides at the roots of the tree, where it is needed. Johnny Georges, of Arcadia, Fla., is the inventor of the Tree-T-Pee.

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asked to come up with a cost proposal for SWF-WMD.

The t-pees also keep "critters" away from the young trees, Georges noted, as well as serving their original purpose of frost-protection.

"The t-pees are most crucial during the first

four years after planting. "It takes four years for a tree to bear fruit," Georges said. During that time, it makes sense for the growers to minimize the costs as much as possible for the non-producing trees, while providing healthy growth conditions, he explained.

Georges owns the patent and the mold for

the Tree-T-Pee, and he emphasizes that they are made entirely from recycled materials and manufactured exclusively in the United States, not overseas. The t-pees cost \$4 each. Georges said he is currently making only about a 10-percent profit on the device, so "nobody's getting rich from this," he laughed. He

feels the product is vitally important to the area's agriculture, profit or not. Georges grew up around citrus growers in Polk County before moving to Arcadia, and knows the industry well, he said.

Georges had a concession at the recent Florida Citrus Expo in Fort Myers, on Aug. 18 and 19,

and the Tree-T-Pee "was the talk of the show," Georges said.

Several growers, including Joshua Citrus Inc., Groves of Peace River, Bowen Bro. Citrus and Gary Blackmon Citrus are among those already using the Tree-T-Pee's. Georges is expecting the product market to expand to include Georgia, California and Texas: three states that could really benefit from the product due to water restrictions and shortages.

Georges noted that the road to success is not easy. "If you believe and know what you are doing is right, never give up on your dreams." He is proud of his product's usefulness and contribution to agriculture.

"I'm just a guy from Arcadia who's teaching the world a better way to conserve water, our most precious resource," he said.

For more information, go to Tree-T-Pee.com, or call Georges at 863-990-2095



Johnny Georges, Arcadia entrepreneur and inventor of the Tree-T-Pee, at Advantage Plastics in Winter Haven, where they can manufacture up to 10,000 t-pees per week. "Enough to fill orders in a timely manner," Georges noted.