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Bronson Announces Arrests For Citrus Quarantine Violations

TALLAHASSEE – Florida Agriculture and Consumer Services Commissioner Charles H. Bronson today announced the arrest of the husband and wife owners of a Central Florida nursery and the couple's son for allegedly violating state statutes involving the movement of citrus products from a quarantined location.

The arrests were made just eight weeks after one of the owners – Shelby A. Mahon, 61, and another son – were arrested by Bronson's Office of Agricultural Law Enforcement (OALE) for allegedly transporting hundreds of diseased citrus trees from their quarantined citrus nursery in Clermont to North Florida, where OALE detected the trees at its interdiction station in Suwannee County.

In this case, authorities say the owners of John's Citrus Trees nursery in Clermont – John L. Mahon, 66 and his wife Shelby as well as son Daniel Mahon, 37 - allegedly sold 724 juvenile citrus trees infested with citrus canker to an unsuspecting citrus grove owner for some \$5,700 last summer and then sold additional trees to Bronson's undercover officers earlier this month.

In addition, OALE investigators claim that when department plant inspectors visited a retail outlet of the nursery at a Central Florida flea market nearly a month ago, John Mahon engaged in threatening and intimidating behavior towards the inspectors, forcing them to leave the premises.

Warrants were issued charging the three suspects with fraud in the illegal sales of the diseased trees, a first-degree felony, and a misdemeanor charge of engaging in nursery stock sales by unregistered dealers. John Mahon was also charged with misdemeanor battery involving the threatening behavior they allegedly exhibited to department plant inspectors when they visited the nursery's retail outlet.

Daniel Mahon was arrested on December 31 by OALE. At that time it was determined that John and Shelby Mahon were out of state. Early this morning, John and Shelby Mahon were detained by the Lake County Sheriff's Office on the outstanding warrants and were booked into the Lake County Jail.

Bronson's law enforcement office works with all of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' various divisions in investigating potential criminal activity, including the Division of Plant Industry (DPI).

DPI works to detect, intercept and control plant pests and diseases that threaten Florida's native and commercially-grown plants and crops. The citrus industry is vital to the state's economy, and DPI is continuing its efforts, along with those of the U.S.

Department of Agriculture and the industry, to control the spread of canker and other citrus diseases.

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