In conjunction with the biennial tree census to update records of active commercial groves, additional information was collected on abandoned citrus acreage. Since counties or portions of counties without commercial citrus may not have been visited, these numbers do not represent the total of all abandoned acres. More accurate numbers could be attained with additional surveys for this purpose. Results of this first survey include 129,869 abandoned acres and 1,671 acres of understory citrus for a total of 131,540 acres located in 8,597 parcels across 30 counties.

St. Lucie County leads with 25,285 abandoned acres, nearly as much as the next two counties combined. Following are Indian River with 13,781 and Hendry with 12,296. Others with more than 10,000 abandoned acres, in descending order, are Polk (11,659), Martin (11,114), and Lake (10,044). An additional 13 counties have 1,000 or more acres abandoned.

A grove of trees is abandoned with any of the following conditions: no production care during the past season, indicated by high weed growth or by “fire hazard” cultivation only to maintain an agricultural exemption; livestock present; weather damaged or unpruned trees that are not economically feasible to maintain; trees pruned after a freeze but with no further care; or unharvested fruit. Growers or caretakers were also contacted to determine the status in some cases. Abandoned understory acres refers to pine stands with unintentional, feral, or abandoned citrus trees scattered throughout.

Field personnel were instructed to determine the status of all abandoned groves marked on the quad maps used for the tree census. Additionally, if any unmarked citrus was found during the performance of regular census activities, the maps were to be updated to show such parcels. Some known abandoned areas away from other active groves were marked on county maps for special visits. Members of the office staff were utilized to check the status of such areas in nearby counties.