

CITRUS CENTER

(956) 968-2132

WESLACO, TEXAS 78596

December 2005

NEWSLETTER

Vol.23

No.6

Season's Greetings

MONTE ALTO DEVELOPMENTS

Since we moved the trailer home from the West farm near Mission in 2004 to the new lease at Rio Farms, Monte Alto (see Newsletter Vol. 22, No. 4 August 2004), the Center's farm and nursery crews have been busy constructing fences and establishing new orchards. So far, two of the four blocks have been planted with Rio Red grapefruit and different Valencia varieties. In the north field planted this fall, some of the trees are on one of the new rootstocks, C22, which may be one of the alternatives to sour orange in the future.

John da Graca



Valencias (foreground) and Rio Red grapefruit at Monte Alto

NEW CENTER DIRECTOR NAMED

Dr Elsa Murano (Vice-Chancellor & Director of the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station) and Dr Ronald Rosati (Dean of the College of Agriculture & Human Sciences, Texas A & M University Kingsville) recently announced that the position of Center Director, formerly held by Dr Jose Amador, will be filled by **Dr J. Michael Gould**. He is expected to take up the appointment in January.

Dr Gould has wide experience in both academia and the private sector. He is a biochemist by training, and worked initially as an assistant professor for the University of Notre Dame (Indiana), and then as a Research Leader for the USDA-ARS in Illinois. In the early 1990s he was the Director of Research of Biotechnology Research and Development Corp. in Peoria, Illinois, and after that served as Vice-President of Research for US Sugar Corporation in Florida.



We look forward to welcoming him and his wife Brenda to the Valley.

AWARDS FOR FORMER CENTER PERSONNEL

The former Center Director, **Dr Jose Amador**, has been elected as a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science for his “distinguished leadership, research contributions in plant pathology, and dissemination of research information to students, producers and policy makers”. A certificate and rosette will be presented to him at the AAAS annual meeting in St Louis in February. Dr Amador was also recognized recently at a luncheon held at the Weslaco Center to mark his retirement; he was presented with a certificate signed by Dr Elsa Murano (Vice-Chancellor and Director of the Experiment Station) acknowledging his 40 years of service, and Dr Ron Rosati (Dean of Agriculture & Human Sciences, Kingsville) presented him with a gift from Dr Rumaldo Juarez, President of Texas A & M University-Kingsville.

Dr Bhimu Patil, formerly of the Citrus Center and now Director of the Vegetable and Fruit Improvement Center in College Station, recently traveled to India to receive the Rajyotsava Award from the Karnataka State Government for his contributions in the field of agriculture, especially in “Foods for Health”. These awards are presented annually in a variety of fields in the arts and sciences, and the 2005 awards were of particular significance because they were given to an elite group of people to mark the 50th anniversary of the founding of Karnataka State.

Congratulations to both Dr Amador and Dr Patil.



Jose Amador

Dr. Ron Rosati

PATRICK HASLEM STUDENT INTERN

Patrick Haslem, Graduate student from Michigan State University, is completing an internship with the Citrus Center's Entomology Dept. Patrick arrived in July, shortly after his marriage to a lovely young Vietnamese girl, Mai Linh. They took up residence at the Center's student housing complex and Patrick quickly became involved in entomology-related citrus research projects. The first of which was testing of two new experimental chemical baits formulated with citrus oil for retrieval and control of the Texas leaf-cutting ant, *Atta texana*. In so doing he became familiar with the biology, ecology and control of this serious damaging pest not only of citrus but a wide variety of plant species in the Valley. Patrick has gained considerable field experience by assisting Dr. French's technicians in miticide spray trials against the citrus rust mite — #1 pest of Texas citrus. He has also assisted in surveys for the *Diaprepes* root weevil utilizing special 'Teddies' Traps placed in orchards and residential sites currently being monitored for this serious new insect pest in South Texas. Most recently, Patrick has had the opportunity to become familiar with leading edge technology of using color infrared imagery for early detection of insect and mite induced stress/damage in glasshouse grown plants. Leader and collaborator in this on-going research project is Dr. Kenneth "Rod" Summy, Dept. of Biology, University of Texas-Pan American in Edinburg, TX.

Patrick and Mai Linh will return soon to Lansing, MI. Patrick hopes to complete all requirements for his Master of Science Degree from Michigan State by January, 2006. They have made a lot of good friends here and we at the Citrus Center wish them the very best in their future endeavors.

J. Victor French



CITRUS IN FALFURRIAS – PAST, PRESENT AND POSSIBLE FUTURE

Work in Dr Louzada's lab on cold tolerance in some citrus types has inspired him to investigate areas outside the Valley for possible future citrus production. This has gained added impetus with news that the various problems the Florida citrus industry is facing may result in an expansion of the Texas industry.

One area of south Texas where there used to be a citrus industry is around Falfurrias and Premont in Brooks County. The first trees were planted by E.R.Ranchal in 1906, and a packingshed was opened in 1914. Freezes were a major problem, leading to the eventual closing of the shed.



Packinghouse
in Falfurrias
1921



6 yr old orchard
Premont 1915



Falfurrias 2005

However, a couple of people in the area still grow some citrus, and the Citrus Center is planning to cooperate with them to test new rootstocks there to see if there is any cold tolerance induced in the scions. Who knows, there may be a future in citrus there and elsewhere in south Texas.

Elias Hernandez, John da Graca & Eliezer Louzada

ANOTHER STUDENT DEFENDS HER THESIS IN CITRUS BIOTECHNOLOGY

Ms. Arlene Pacheco first came to the Citrus Center as a undergraduate student from the University of Texas at Brownsville to have hands-on research experience in molecular biology. Upon her bachelors' graduation she, joined the graduate program at Texas A&M-Kingsville Citrus Center and studied the expression of a gene triggered by cold in several citrus species compared to trifoliolate orange. She found that in the cold hardy trifoliolate orange, the gene starts its expression much faster than in the cold sensitive Mexican lime, which might explain why trifoliolate orange can endure cold better than Mexican lime. Arlene defended her thesis in November 17, 2005 and will join the Ph.D. program in molecular environmental science at A&M-College Station. We wish the best for Arlene in her new endeavor.

Eliezer Louzada



Subscriptions to the bimonthly Newsletter are \$5 a year or \$8 for two years. International rate is \$7 a year. Make checks payable to Texas A&M University-Kingsville. Address comments or inquiries to Newsletter Editor, Texas A&M University- Kingsville Citrus Center, 312 N. International Blvd, Weslaco, Texas 78596 or, in the case of signed articles, directly to the staff member named. Articles appearing in the Newsletter may be reproduced, in whole or in part, without special permission. Newspapers, periodicals and other publications are encouraged to reprint articles which would be of interest to their readers. Credit is requested if information is reprinted.

Mention of a trademark, proprietary product, or vendor does not constitute a guarantee or warranty of the product by the Texas A&M University-Kingsville Citrus Center and does not imply its recommendation to the exclusion of the other products that may also be suitable.

Texas A&M University-Kingsville
Citrus Center
312 N. International Blvd
Weslaco, TX 78596