

# swfrec.ifas.ufl.edu - The Southwest Florida Research and Education Center (SWFREC)

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The Southwest Florida Research and Education Center (SWFREC) is 2 miles north of Immokalee on State Road 29. The Research and Education Center facilities are located on a 320-acre tract of land and include: 17,000 square feet of administrative and laboratory space, research greenhouses, and maintenance facilities. Currently, 30 acres are in use for vegetable research and 70 acres for citrus (20 developed and 50 under construction). Additionally, 150 acres are used as a native range/scrub jay preserve and include a 30-acre water reservoir.

Initially established as the South Florida Field Laboratory in 1955, the Center began investigating the principal crops of watermelons, tomatoes, cucumbers, sweet peppers, and squash. In addition to research on vegetable production, nutritional and variety tests of improved and native forage crops were conducted. In the 1980s, the rapidly expanding citrus industry in Southwest Florida caused the Center to also focus research in that area. By 1988, a fully developed research and extension program for citrus was added. All of this work continues today as the SWFREC strives to:

- \* Develop new and expanded existing knowledge and technology related to vegetable, citrus, beef, and sugar cane production to allow Florida agriculture to remain efficient and economically competitive with other geographic areas of the world.
- \* Assist the Cooperative Extension Service, UF/IFAS campus departments, and other research and education centers in extension, educational training, and cooperative research programs for the benefit of Florida producers, students, and consumers.
- \* Determine benefits of cover crops and land application of non-hazardous wastes to crop production.
- \* Efficient use of fertilizer and water in citrus, vegetable, and sugar cane production.
- \* Define and seek solutions to problems associated with newly planted and young citrus trees in the flatwoods of Florida and the propagation and production of citrus nursery trees.
- \* Develop a systems approach for the utilization of vegetable transplant production and direct seeding for efficient stand establishment.
- \* Improve utilization, production, and quality of native range.
- \* Investigate and develop water quality management practices useful to agricultural producers in meeting changing government requirements, and undertake regional monitoring programs toward identifying trends and priorities.
- \* Develop economical and environmentally sound management practices to limit the insect and disease damage to crops in Southwest Florida.

\* Utilize the Integrated Resource Management (IRM) approach to assist the livestock industry of Florida to achieve efficient production by contributing to the solution of livestock production problems.

## MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

\* Developed superior fertilization techniques for young orange trees which resulted in a major reduction of nitrogen application rates while obtaining near-maximum growth and yield.

\* Established criteria to determine the relative suitability of land for citrus production in the Florida flatwoods.

\* Identified control techniques for tropical soda apple, resulting in Florida ranchers treating more than 75,000 acres infested with this noxious weed.

\* Research results indicated that native grasses require rest periods between grazing events to maintain plant vigor and persistence. Over-grazing for 1-2 years will result in loss of valuable plants.

\* Research indicated that deeper planting of young sweet pepper plants results in increased yields and improved methods of plant care.

\* Developed the recommendations of removing soil from around the trunk base of young citrus trees to reduce the attack of termites. This improved practice is more effective than using pesticides.

\* Developed techniques to enhance wildlife habitat and populations in citrus groves.

\* Research findings indicate that controlled-release fertilizers can establish and develop a citrus tree to production age in equal time and equal size, with less fertilizer than conventional fertilizers. "

Source: <http://swfrec.ifas.ufl.edu/intro.htm>

## Comments

Udut, Kenneth

## Research and Extension Areas

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