



The first building and the first lab at the Citrus Research and Education Center

Driving principles still in play

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Two months after the United States entered World War I, the Florida Legislature called for the creation of a citrus science community.

It was, of course, at the behest of growers, who saw an experiment station as the home for important principles: First, that science is imperative to growing citrus profitably and responsibly. Second, that a community of scientists focused on citrus would advance this knowledge more rapidly and thoroughly than would the same number of scientists in isolation.

What was then known as the Citrus Experiment Station was established in Lake Alfred to host that community of problem solvers a century ago. The facility would grow to provide the labs,

greenhouses and groves where these problem solvers could test their ideas about how to improve what happens in your groves.

The commitment to science as solution and to community pursuit of knowledge under one glass roof has given generations of brilliant minds opportunity and purpose.

Today, this scientific community's home is called the Citrus Research and Education Center (CREC). It was the first University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences center to take root off campus, and it celebrates its 100th anniversary this year.

The technologies employed by the center have changed much over the decades. The principles that guide it have not.

DECADES OF DISCOVERIES

Those principles drove Florida Department of Citrus and U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists working at the center to develop a product — frozen concentrated orange juice — that could be transported to troops overseas during World War II.

They're what drove Ivan Stewart and C.D. Leonard to search for and discover a cure for yellow spot in the 1950s.

They're what drove Dave Prosser to build a hedging machine at the center in the 1950s.

They're what drove R.F. Suit and E.P. DuCharme to find the nematode that caused spreading decline and help develop a control for it in the 1960s.

They're what drove Larry Parsons to demonstrate the effectiveness of microsprinkler irrigation for freeze protection at CREC in the 1980s.

Jude Grosser, Fred Gmitter and other veteran faculty at CREC may very well join the pantheon with biotech breakthroughs that lead to HLB-tolerant trees. And Nian Wang is bringing the next-generation technology CRISPR to bear on canker and HLB.

The opportunity for such

purpose-driven work, where scientists can so clearly see the benefits in your groves of what they do in their labs, continues to attract world-class minds to Lake Alfred.

GROWER SUPPORT

That direct connection comes from your feedback and your support. Our 100 years of scientific breakthroughs could not have happened without growers offering space in their groves, observations about what was working and financial support.

We've planned a single day to celebrate a century of science, community and grower support. Please join us on November 29 at the center for a field day and anniversary celebration.

The story of CREC is constant progress. It started as a single residence for a superintendent and visiting researchers and has grown to be the largest research center in the world dedicated to a single commodity.

That wasn't preordained. You can't just open a lab and expect people to

recognize you as the Harvard of citrus science. Only with decade after decade of discovery do you establish yourself as a scientific leader.

Fortunately, our clients — you — appreciate the long view. In your business, you know there's no room for what is nowadays being called "a post-truth world." That would be a post-citrus world.

Imperfect as it is, science is the best tool we've devised for arriving at truth. A century ago, your great grandfathers concluded that their observations alone wouldn't assure the continued success of their groves.

The \$13,000 they raised started a tradition of putting a public university and agency Ph.Ds. on the case. The 100th anniversary of CREC reminds us how important science remains to citrus and the amazing foresight of Polk County growers to create what would turn out to be a century-old home for it.

You're the heirs to that vision. Every time you pay a box tax, show up at a Citrus Research and Development



Foundation meeting, contribute to an endowment or invite scientists to experiment on an acre of your grove, you're providing the same vision to your heirs.

The Citrus Research and Education Center is the brick-and-mortar manifestation of that vision. So come to see it, for the first time, or for the 100th time, on November 29. 🍊

Jack Payne is the University of Florida's senior vice president for agriculture and natural resources and head of UF's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.

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