



For the past 21 years, I have had the honor and pleasure of working for TAMUK as head of the Citrus Center in Weslaco, initially as Deputy Center Director of the two A&M centers there, and since 2008 as Director of the Citrus Center. My first job in South Africa was at the Citrus & Subtropical Fruit Research Institute where I worked for 5 years on, amongst other things, assisting in the establishment of a certified virus-free citrus budwood program (*see photo below*).



*In a South African citrus greenhouse (c.1976)*

During the 20 years I worked at my alma mater (University of Natal), I was able to spend sabbaticals at research centers in the US, Spain and Israel, including 8 months at the TAMUK Citrus Center in 1994/95 to assist in the setting up of a virus-free budwood program here. In 1999 I was hired as the deputy center director, arriving here with my family in late June.

The Citrus Center has a mission to serve the citrus industry of Texas as well as the university. There have been several successful endeavors during my time here. These are all a result of the close teamwork between, faculty, staff, students and visitors – without this we would not have achieved what has been accomplished. Since my primary passion has been in virus-free budwood schemes, I am particularly proud of our Texas program. We now supply an average of 250,000 buds annually to citrus nurseries statewide, ensuring that nurseries receive top quality, true-to-type, pathogen-free budwood. Another excellent service we provide is through our USDA-certified disease diagnostic lab which has detected some major exotic citrus pathogens including HLB, sweet orange scab and canker.

We also acquired a new building during this time, and ownership of the former USDA-ARS research farm. Research done by Center faculty has resulted in water saving strategies, areawide citrus psyllid management, root weevil control using ground cover, new orchard planting design with multiple benefits, improved early detection of HLB, development of a new redder, sweeter grapefruit, and much more. Faculty have been amazingly successful at successful grant writing, now bringing in an average of \$3 million a year. Since 1997, new faculty are hired with a 25% teaching appointment, which they meet mainly through graduate classes and student supervision – during my time here, 13 PhD and 104 MS students have graduated.

I take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to everyone who has worked with me at the Center over the years, as well as all the folk on campus who have helped. I am especially grateful to the leadership of our college deans during this time. I am also grateful to the support from the Texas citrus industry – an amazing community of hard-working, dedicated growers. I wish TAMUK, the Citrus Center and the Texas citrus industry all the best for the future.