



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Center for Applied Horticultural Research: Solving Current Issues in the Green Industry through Applied Research

Vista, California, October 2008. Altman Specialty Plants Inc., a well known wholesale nursery business, has completed the construction of a new greenhouse. What makes this new greenhouse so special as to merit a press release is not that it is state of the art, or that it has five climate controlled chambers, but that it is solely dedicated to research. Altman Plants is actively implementing scientific research to improve the field of ornamental plant production by opening The Center for Applied Horticultural Research (CfAHR).

Ken and Deena Altman have long recognized that sound research improves plant production. "The inspiration for the Center has come from a number of sources," Ken offered. "I was impressed with the Center for Applied Nursery Research that McCorkle Nursery has supported. As a board member of The American Floral Endowment, I have seen first hand the need for applied research and the great results that come from supporting that research. At Altman Plants we have had Dr. John Erwin from the University of Minnesota helping us with our company research and here again I have seen the value that comes from having a time and place to be inquisitive. There is no shortage of issues that need to be solved; however, the resources available are limited. The CfAHR is the Altman's way to contribute to the solution. In the best of worlds, this will serve as a model for other nurseries to help fill the gap in resources so we can support our industry researchers."

The CfAHR, located on the grounds of the Altman Plants facility in Vista, California, sits on an acre of land. It has a laboratory equipped to conduct applied plant research, a climate controlled greenhouse with five individual rooms, shade and sun outdoor areas and a Quonset-type greenhouse. The Center has a conference room that will be available to organizations and institutions in horticulture that need a place for events. Unity of the horticultural industry will determine its ability to conquer the issues it faces. The CfAHR will provide a place for the sharing of ideas, practices and current issues in the green industry.



The CfAHR is a 501 (c)(3) organization. As a non-profit organization, the CfAHR will maintain and manage resources and facilities to carry out applied research based on growers' and industry needs. The Center activities are overseen by a Board of Directors composed of accomplished industry representatives. The Center Director, Lucia Villavicencio, coordinates project execution and everyday activities.

Lucia Villavicencio is a graduate of North Carolina State University with a Master's degree in Horticulture and a PhD in Plant Physiology. She is very enthusiastic about the Center and its mission. "The CfAHR will generate information to help growers improve their products, maximize their profits and decrease production costs," said Dr. Villavicencio. "At the Center, we will work on conducting research to address individual issues and particular situations."

All the information generated at the Center will be available to growers, to the industry, and the public in general. One example of the Center efforts to promote research is the dedication of lab space for a field office for our UC Floriculture and Nursery Farm Advisor in San Diego County, Jim Bethke. Bethke expects this field office will allow him to increase the scope of his research projects

The CfAHR encourages the submission of ideas that could provide solutions to current horticultural issues. The ideas will be studied and projects developed to test them. The application process includes an idea submission form and, for those who can be more actively involved in implementing research, a proposal submission form. Projects need to address horticultural issues in commercial nursery and ornamental plant production. Areas of interest are: production protocols, plant breeding, pest and disease control, plant propagation and postharvest management. All research conducted at the Center will be done in a sustainable manner and applying good conservational practices.

CfAHR is open to anyone interested in the green industry and its challenges. We hope it will become a great resource for all our friends in the green industry and the community in general.

For more information please contact Lucia Villavicencio at (760) 802-9787 or at lvilla@cfahr.org

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