



## Lucia Villavicencio talks about grower-supported research

**Q. Why did Altman Specialty Plants decide to open its own research facility rather than fund university floriculture research programs?**

**A.** Altman Specialty Plants in Vista, Calif., has supported academic research in the past, and those programs have greatly benefited the nursery industry and the company. However, there is a need for research conducted in local conditions and for applied research designed to solve practical issues that the local ornamental horticultural industry might be facing. We believe having a local, non-profit research center, independently managed, will appeal to growers, encouraging them to contact us with ideas and suggestions pertaining to research they feel will benefit the local industry. We hope that having a facility available to conduct research in a controlled, yet typical commercial setting, will help generate data and solutions needed in the local industry and it will become a resource utilized by those currently engaged in research in the area.

Research topics are determined in a certain measure by the funding sources. By having the center we can assure that good ideas will be considered and the applied research that is conducted will directly benefit the ornamentals industry in the Southwest. We also hope that the center will be the first step toward a more organized group of ornamental plant growers who desire to improve their facilities by testing their methods and seeing the value of research when applied to commercial operations.

**Q. From whom is the center requesting the submission of research proposals?**

**A.** We are requesting information on current industry issues. We encourage anyone affiliated with the industry to contact us. The center's Web site includes a link to an idea submission form and a proposal submission form. The idea submission form is designed for those people that have information about specific issues but do not have formal training in conducting research. Submitted ideas will be reviewed by the center director and the board of directors and developed into projects to be implemented at the center's facilities. We also expect the center to become a resource for research scientists and horticultural companies that wish to conduct research in the Southwest.

The proposal submission form gives researchers and companies a chance to design their own projects and let the center know about resources needed and how it can be of assistance. The center's personnel will provide help related to the projects, be it daily maintenance activities, sample processing or data analysis.

**Q. Who will be conducting the center's research projects, and is there a time limit in regards to how long the projects will take?**

**A.** The projects will be conducted by the center's director and by those applicants qualified to conduct research that wish to be involved. There is no time limit pre-established for the projects, but we need to know before the project is started, the amount of time and space needed for its completion. The number of projects to be conducted simultaneously is subject to space availability.

The center has recently started oper-

ating, and projects are being handled on a first-come, first-served basis. A few projects related to aloe mite control, effect of anti-transpirants on bedding plants and silicon absorption by ornamental plants have been accepted and will be starting soon. There is space available for expanding the center if there is a need for it.

**Q. Will the information collected from the research projects be disseminated to the industry?**

**A.** All the information generated at the center will be disseminated to the public in general. The center will publish a biannual newsletter including all the research projects currently in progress and completed. There will also be open houses. The information generated will also be published in trade magazines and scientific journals and will be made available on the center's Web site.

**Q. Is the center soliciting monetary and product contributions from growers, suppliers and manufacturers to be used in the research projects?**

**A.** At the moment we are not actively soliciting monetary or product contributions. We would appreciate donations, but they are not required when submitting a research proposal to the center. The center is fully supported by Ken and Deena Altman as a part of their commitment to the industry. In the future we hope to be able to augment their support with donations, fundraising and grants for specific research projects.

**For more:** Center for Applied Horticultural Research; (760) 802-9787; [www.cfahr.org](http://www.cfahr.org).