



# Farm Smart Newsletter

## What's Growing On at the UC Desert Research and Extension Center

April 2020



### A message from the Director



Welcome to the first issue of our What's Growing On newsletter. I appreciate your interest in keeping connected to Farm Smart and DREC. The newsletter will be of value in keeping you involved with us as we adjust to new ways of providing service to our community. Our 2020 calendar year started full of educational and outreach events scheduled along with 42 research projects conducted within our facilities. Our winter educational programs included two signature events: Farm-to-Preschool Festival and IV Ag Tours for Teachers. Farm Smart staff, Stacey Amparano and Stephanie Collins led these programs and joined efforts with several local stakeholders to have successful events. The current 42 projects at the center include: Plant Breeding and Variety Trials (13), Irrigation and Fertilizer Management (8), Forage and Agronomic Crops (6), Vegetable Disease Management (3), Environmental Studies (2), Food Safety (1), Weed Management (1), Livestock (1), and Outreach and Educational Programs (7). Lead academics are from the University of California system (ANR, Davis campus, and Riverside campus), the US Department of Agriculture, and Canada. Research at the center tackles current diverse issues in the top 10 agricultural and livestock commodities in the Imperial County.

Our current vegetable and small grain season brought several interesting projects from developing new cultivars, understanding the safe use of biological amendments in fresh produce, to improving irrigation and nutrient management. I continue performing research aimed to improve irrigation and nutrient management in fresh market onions.



Onion samples for biomass and root analysis in Jairo Diaz's trial.



Staff Research Associate, Juan Buenrostro taking field data on lettuce trial led by Dr. Richard Michelmore from UC Davis.



Agricultural Technician, Efrain Sambrano (left) and Principal Agricultural Technician, Rogelio Ortega (right) selecting and collecting barley and triticale samples.



Agricultural Technician, Gersain Lopez, installing a flow meter in a research plot.

Weather conditions during the first quarter included mild temperatures and heavy rain. 1.82 inches of rain in March which is more than half of Imperial Valley average annual precipitation. The heavy rain showers interrupted field operations and put facilities at risk. ([click here to see detail temperatures and rain records of CIMIS station at DREC](#)).



Flooding in our front lawn (left) and flooded research fields (right) on 3/12/2020

In March 2020 the nation began to feel the effects of COVID-19. California was one of the first states with active cases. As the pandemic progressed, the state of California mandated a stay-at-home order and University of California leaders implemented plans for our staff to work remotely while having minimum on-site staff performing essential activities. All public events are cancelled, and only critical research and facility management activities are conducted these days. These are unprecedented times, and we are working hard to serve the needs of our community. Farm Smart has been developing online materials and interacting with stakeholders via social media, phone, and emails. We are also available through outreach efforts like this newsletter.

I hope you and your loved ones are following recommendations from your local, state, and federal health authorities and by working together we will be back to our normal lives in the near future.

Stay healthy and safe,

Jairo Diaz

*UC DREC Director*

[Visit the DREC website](#) | [Follow DREC on Twitter](#)

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Westmorland Food Pantry collects fresh produce from the Farm Smart garden

# Farm Smart Happenings

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**We are now accepting reservations for field trips in the 2020-2021 school year.**

Don't hesitate,  
spots fill up quick!  
Please call (760)356-3067 or  
email [scwills@ucanr.edu](mailto:scwills@ucanr.edu) to  
book your field trip.  
[Click here to see our program descriptions](#)

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## FARM SMART HAS GONE VIRTUAL!

While our wagon rides around the farm have been postponed, Farm Smart is using creativity in a time of uncertainty to make an impact on our community. While exploring opportunities to transform our field trip gardens as a means to provide fresh vegetables to the community, Farm Smart has also transformed the way they are delivering their field trip program. The Vegetable Adventures program usually offered in March and April has been adapted to an easy to follow at-home learning experience- we're bringing AG learning to your living room! This lesson includes a variety of learning methods and AGtivities that are educational and fun too! We look forward to getting back on the farm and warming up the tractors for our visitors in the

Fall. For now, we are continuing our efforts to provide online lessons for parents and teachers to teach people where their food comes from and the importance of the agriculture around us. Visit our website to see the available lessons:  
[https://drec.ucanr.edu/farm\\_smart/lessons](https://drec.ucanr.edu/farm_smart/lessons)

*Make sure to follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#) for fun AGtivities, recipes, and updates from the farm. As always, you can contact us at (760)356-3067 or [scwills@ucanr.edu](mailto:scwills@ucanr.edu) with any questions you may have.*



## 2020 Highlight: IV Ag Tours for Teachers

IV AG Tours for Teachers: Before social distancing became our new normal, Farm Smart brought together educators from across Imperial County to swap their indoor shoes for muck boots and tour farms, ranches, and agriculture facilities around the valley. Funded by The Imperial Valley Community Foundation, this program aimed to provide an opportunity for teachers and counselors to learn first-hand about food and fiber production, agriculture technologies, and the protection of natural resources so that they are inspired to teach students about how vital agriculture and environmental stewardship are to a healthy society. The program also offered curriculum and resources for teachers to incorporate what they learned into their classroom while making connections to Imperial County agriculture and natural resources. Fifteen educators, ranging from 5<sup>th</sup> grade to the college level, participated in the tour around the Imperial County, in addition to guest speakers on the bus and at various tour stops. Farm Smart would like to thank the Imperial Valley

Community Foundation for awarding the grant to make this program possible, the generous donation from Vessey & Co, Imperial Ca Olive Mill, One World Beef, IVH20, and tour our wonderful guest speakers for donating their time: Vince Brooke (IID), Jack Vessey (Vessey & CO), Shannon Hoyt (VegCool), Cher Watte (IVH20), Blake Plourd (El Toro Land & Cattle), and Bill Plourd (El Toro Export), Brooke Latack (UCCE), and Kristian Salgado (UCCE). This program was a great success and we hope to continue exploring agriculture in the Imperial Valley with our wonderful educators.

# THANK YOU TO OUR EVENT SPONSORS & GUEST SPEAKERS

IV Ag Tours for Teachers was made possible through funding from the Imperial Valley Community Foundation and the generous support of our Ag community



View coverage of the event at [KYMA](#) and [Imperial Valley Press](#)

## Recipe of the Month



A Farm Smart favorite

## Marinated Carrot Salad



This tangy, refreshing dish makes a great side with any protein.

### Ingredients:

- 2 pounds carrots, sliced
- 1 (10.75 ounce) can condensed tomato soup

served to about 900 Center visitors in 2017. It also happens to be an award-winning recipe from the Holtville Carrot Festival submitted by Farm Smart volunteer Janet Schwarzman (pictured above with her husband, Bob)

- 1/4 cup white sugar
- 1/2 cup white vinegar
- 1/4 cup canola oil
- 1 teaspoon prepared mustard
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1/2 cup chopped celery
- 1/2 cup chopped green onion
- 1 green bell pepper, seeded and cut into strips

#### Directions

- Bring a large pot of water to boil, add carrots and simmer until tender, approximately 3 to 5 minutes. Drain and set aside.
- In a large bowl, whisk together the soup, sugar, vinegar, oil, mustard and Worcestershire sauce. Add carrots, celery, onion and pepper and toss to coat. Cover and refrigerate at least 4 hours to allow carrots to marinate.

**Your gift supports the efforts of Farm Smart to provide quality agriculture, natural resources and environmental education to our community.**

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