

# EREC SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2020

## A Word From our Director: Dr. Gregg Nuessly



Our world has become more complicated to navigate in the last 6 months due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. UF has have experienced numerous upheavals in scheduling, programming, research, and extension. So, too, have all activities at EREC been affected by the pandemic. But we have all worked hard to develop and implement plans to restart teaching, research and extension while maintaining social distancing, wearing masks, and frequently washing our hands and sanitizing our work environments. While some program plans were completely shelved until next year due to work restrictions put in place by Florida and UF, most began again in May and have made great progress trying to make up for lost time. Those of you whom have had the chance to visit EREC have probably notice that we have begun relandscaping around several of our buildings on campus. The birds, insects, mammals and reptiles have already responded with increased presence which we intend to integrate into our extension community activities.



We are preparing for a very busy field season at EREC and laboratory-based projects are finding creative ways to complete work while maintaining strict social distancing and spreading out the workload throughout all hours of the day and night. Our Faculty welcome your questions and are eager to share the results of their programs designed to continue to meet our mission goals of sustainable agriculture. You will find several of those stories in this newsletter, as well as information about awards our Faculty have received in the last several months. Contact them directly to arrange meetings and field visits and keep an eye out for announcements for virtual programming over TEAMS or Zoom.

It has been a very challenging year and we expect more of the same into 2021. We are having discussions now about how to plan and conduct our EREC 100th Anniversary Celebration currently scheduled for April 8, 2021. Keep it on your calendar!

# EVERGLADES REC: STUDENT UPDATES

## New Students at the EREC



Please help us welcome (back) a new Master's student, Alex Gerardo Rodriguez Calderon. Alex will be conducting the research project: integrated weed management system for sweet corn in the EAA with Dr. Odero. Alex is from El Salvador and will be with us until summer of 2022.



Please help us welcome a new Master's student, Venkatanaga Shiva Datta Sharma Chiruvelli, but you can call him Datta. He will be conducting researching with Dr. Odero to evaluate the effects of depth of flooding on fall panicum growth & reproduction.



Please help us welcome a new PhD student, Balwinder Kaur. She will be conducting researching on the spatial ecology of corn silk fly with Dr. Beuzelin. Balwinder is from Punjab, India and will be with us until fall of 2023.



Please help us welcome a new Master's student, Hima Varsha Madala. She will be conducting researching on sugar-cane planting methods with Dr. Sandhu. Hima is from India and will be with us until Jan. 2022.



# EVERGLADES REC: STUDENT UPDATES

## EREC STUDENT ASSOCIATION

Congratulations to our new student association officers for 2020-2021!



Please follow the Everglades REC student association on social media at:

FACEBOOK: @UFERECSA

TWITTER: @ErecStudent

## EVERGLADES REC: STUDENT UPDATES

### Congratulations to Gustavo Kreutz

We would like to congratulate Gustavo Kreutz on passing his qualifying exams to become a Ph.D. candidate! Gustavo is a Ph.D. student in the Horticultural Sciences Department and is working with Dr. Germán Sandoya. He is working in the breeding and genetics of lettuce for nutrient use efficiency; he is also interested in diseases that threaten the lettuce industry at the EAA. You can follow him on social media: @kreutzgusatvo.





# EVERGLADES REC: FACULTY UPDATES

## DR. CALVIN ODERO

We would like to congratulate Dr. Calvin Odero on getting approval from the Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship Program to work on a project with Kibabii University in Kenya. You can follow Dr. Odero on social media: @ERECWeedScience



# EVERGLADES REC: FACULTY UPDATES

## DR. GERMAN SANDOYA

We would like to congratulate Dr. German Sandoya on receiving funding from the SEEDIT program! The research focuses on breeding new values for leafy vegetables in protected agriculture using lettuce as a model. Here is an excerpt about the program, written by Lourdes Rodriguez.

“Germán V. Sandoya-Miranda, assistant professor of lettuce breeding and genetics at Everglades Research and Education Center, overseeing the project as principal investigator, has been researching BLS since 2016. Sandoya is joined by UF’s Calvin Odero, UF/IFAS associate professor of agronomy specializing in weed science as co-lead, UF/IFAS Extension Palm Beach staff, Pennsylvania State University’s Carolee Bull, a professor and department head of Department of Plant Pathology, Maria Gorgo-Gourovitch, an Extension educator and Plant Pathology affiliate instructor at Pennsylvania State University, and lettuce plant breeder and geneticist Ivan Simko of the USDA-ARS in California.”

“This is the first time that experts in plant breeding, genetics, bacteriology, and weed science partner to develop sustainable and long-term solutions to battle an unpredictable and devastating disease in lettuce”, said Sandoya. “I have intentionally brought together the leading experts representing the strongest possible group to work on this disease for a variety of geographic impacted areas and assorted farm-size growers.”

To read the full article, copy and paste this link: <http://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/news/2020/05/21/uf-ifas-awarded-850k-usda-grant-to-lead-multistate-research-study-disease-resistance-in-lettuce-boost-cultivar-production/>

You can follow Dr. Sandoya on social media: @UFLettuce.





# EVERGLADES REC: FACULTY UPDATES

DR. SAMIRA DAROUB

- We would like to congratulate Dr. Samira Daroub on being appointed to to serve on the U.S. National Committee for Soil Science at the National Academy of Sciences!
- We would also like to congratulate Dr. Daroub on being selected as an ASA Fellow! The Fellow designation is the highest recognition bestowed by the American Society of Agronomy.
- You can follow Dr. Daroub on social media: @DaroubLab.





## EVERGLADES REC: FACULTY UPDATES

### DR. HARDEV SANDHU

- We would like to congratulate Dr. Hardev Sandhu on receiving tenure, and being promoted to associate professor!
- We also would like to congratulate Dr. Hardev Sandhu for receiving a grant from the Department of Energy! He is leading a project on the Evaluation of Energycane for Bioenergy and Sustainable Agricultural systems in collaboration with 3 other scientists from UF and the Argonne National Lab.
- At UF/IFAS Everglades Research and Education Center, scientists have released five new sugarcane cultivars to farmers – a win for the crop breeding program, USDA ARS and the Florida Sugar Cane League made up of sugar cane growers. “Our breeding program is unique,” said Dr. Hardev Singh Sandhu, assistant professor of agronomy at EREC. “It is a collaborate program among UF/IFAS, USDA, and the Florida Cane League, Inc (sugar industry in Florida -a scientific group) growers and companies are involved. Made possible by a \$1.3 million grant. This is a continuous grant that funds a breeding program, plant pathologists, and the science to improve viability for the crop. In this collaboration Florida Sugar Cane League provides funding as well as land for the field trials and involve two agronomists and two USDA scientists. Two of the new varieties are grown on muck soil, while the other three varieties are grown in sand.





## EVERGLADES REC: FACULTY UPDATES

### DR. RICHARD RAID

- Recently, the EREC released a video with the help of Dr. Richard Raid detailing his barn owl extension project. The mission of Dr. Raid's project is to build nesting boxes, specifically made for barn owls, that overlook the crop and cane fields at our center. The barn owls are used as a natural form of rodent control to keep mice and rabbits from chewing away at the crops. Since there are virtually no trees in the fields, the nesting boxes are vital in keeping barn owls patrolling the area, and it seems to be working. Dr. Raid said, "Because of our nesting box program, we have some of the highest barn owl populations anywhere in North America." In the latter half of the video, Dr. Raid dissects barn owl pellets, which showcases the remains of various barn owl prey. **To watch the full video, click this link:** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q2GP\\_JAZ9Mk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q2GP_JAZ9Mk).



- Dr. Raid is credited in this article about: A Plant Breeding Breakthrough: Downy Mildew Resistant Sweet Basil. **To read the full article, click this link:** <https://www.growingproduce.com/vegetables/a-breeding-breakthrough-downy-mildew-resistant-sweet-basil/>.

# EVERGLADES REC: FACULTY UPDATES

## DR. JEHANGIR "JANGO" BHADHA

- Congratulations to Dr. Jango Bhadha on receiving the 2020 Seymour Goldweber Extension Professional and Enhancement Award. This award provides a term professorship to outstanding state or county Extension faculty members who has developed an educational program that contributes to making the Florida Extension Service the best in the nation. The Award is available to faculty working in Charlotte, Glades, Martin, Lee, Hendry, Palm Beach, Collier, Broward, Miami-Dade, or Monroe counties, and the candidate must have national recognition from a professional organization or society.
- September is officially national rice month. Mike Loizzo, of UF/IFAS communications reached out to Dr. Bhada for information about his research, and wrote:
 

“Cultivating rice in Florida is unique because the crop generally does not need fertilizer. This is because the plants draw on excess phosphorus, nitrogen, and potassium in the soil from the previous sugarcane or vegetable crop,” said Dr. Jehangir Bhadha, assistant professor of soil, water, and nutrient management in the UF/IFAS Soil and Water Sciences Department.

Bhadha is one of the authors of Rice Production in Florida: A Handbook from UF/IFAS Extension. With production steadily rising in the state, the handbook is a useful resource for Florida producers, researchers, and the general public, which gets updated regularly.

“The handbook includes such topics as rice variety trials, water management, nutrients, pest and disease management, and information related to post-harvest processing,” Bhadha explained.

- **To read the full article, copy and paste this link:** <http://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/swsd-ept/2020/09/02/national-rice-month/#:~:text=September%20is%20National%20Rice%20Month,Soil%20and%20Water%20Sciences%20Department>
- **NEW PUBLICATIONS:** Fu, Y., Bhadha, J.H., Rott, P., Beuzelin, J.M., Kanissery, R. 2020 Investigating the use of aquatic weeds as biopesticides towards promoting sustainable agriculture. PLoS ONE 15(8): e0237258. doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0237258





## CONCLUSION, SOCIAL MEDIA, UPCOMING EVENTS PAGE. TSS DATES, ETC.

### Upcoming Everglades REC Events:

- Thursday Seminar Series will return this fall! Dates for the seminars will be announced at a later date.
- April 8 2021: 100 Year Anniversary Celebration and Open House. More updates to come in the following months!

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