

In Memorium

Charles W. Coggins, Jr.
Professor of Plant Physiology, Emeritus
UC Riverside
1930 – 2019



Charlie was a treasured member of the College of Natural and Agricultural Sciences and the Department of Botany and Plant Sciences for many years. He was hired as a Jr. Plant Physiologist in 1957, joining what was, at the time, the Department of Horticulture. He advanced through the ranks to Associate Plant Physiologist to Plant Physiologist and to Professor of Plant Physiology and Plant Physiologist in 1975. He had a long and distinguished career working primarily in citrus, with an emphasis on the use of plant growth regulators (PGRs) to improve citrus production. He served as department chair from 1975-1982. During his tenure as chair, he oversaw the transfer of the Botany faculty from the Biology Department into a renamed department now known as Botany and Plant Sciences. In addition, he oversaw the hiring of the first female faculty into the department. Charlie was both a respected classroom teacher and major professor to MS and PhD students. His major formal class was “Citriculture” which had a laboratory. Charlie took early retirement in 1994, but returned on part-time recall basis for several years, finally fully retiring ~ 2001.

Charlie was dedicated to the citrus industry and served as Chairman of the Board of Directors of the California Citrus Quality Council for many years. In 2008, he was honored by California Citrus Mutual (CCM) for his work on plant growth regulators, and his research was credited with significantly extending the fresh market season for navel oranges and other varieties. It was said that his research on PGRs has been described as the single most economically beneficial research of the last century. At that time, CCM

established the Charles W. Coggins annual scholarship, which is awarded to an upper division undergraduate student in agriculture. In addition, an endowment in Charlie's name was established at UCR to support a CNAS graduate student working in citriculture.

During the late 1950s, Charlie found that when gibberellic acid was applied to citrus it delayed senescence - the growth phase from full maturity to death - of the rind. Under field conditions, Charlie transformed this knowledge into sound recommendations that are now standard horticultural practices used not only on oranges and lemons in California, but also in most other citrus-producing countries of the world, including Israel, Spain, South Africa, Australia, Morocco, Turkey and Cuba.

Before Charlie's discovery, the citrus industry's calendar year was divided approximately into thirds: a Valencia season, a navel season, and four months without fruit. But Charlie's recommendation of using gibberellic acid extended the growing seasons of navel and Valencia oranges from about nine months to twelve months, providing year-round employment for pickers and packing house workers, and permitting marketing organizations to maintain continuity with their customers.

Charlie is also credited with making significant contributions to both basic physiology and applied horticultural practices that are important to solving the problems of alternate bearing, rind staining, creasing, and small fruit size of the Valencia orange.

He also made a major contribution to research on naphthaleneacetic acid that resulted in its acceptance as a fruit-thinning agent for citrus. In addition, his research led to a better understanding of the maturation of dates and the development of a new avocado fruit maturity standard for California.

He was born November 17, 1930 in North Carolina and died on August 18, 2019. He was preceded in death by two sons from cystic fibrosis. He is survived by his wife Irene of 68 years, a son and four grandchildren.

Adapted from an obituary circulated by the College of Natural and Agricultural Sciences with editorial changes made by Darleen DeMason and Carol Lovatt.