

CARES Recipient Profile



Farm: Carroll Brothers Nursery
Location: St. Petersburg, Pinellas County
Date of Origination: 1950
Commodities: Nursery



Although he's been retired for years, Harmon Carroll still stays involved in the family business. Through the art of grafting, Carroll helps produce Florida-friendly gardenias for his sons, Bob and Richard Carroll, of Carroll Brothers Nursery.

Carroll Brothers is one of the largest wholesale nurseries in Pinellas County, growing about 200,000 gardenia plants, making it the largest grower of grafted gardenias east of the Mississippi.

The nursery was one of the first in Florida to sign up with the state's Best Management Practices for container nurseries. Carroll Brothers partnered with the Florida West Coast Resource Conservation and Development Council (RC&D) and the National Resource and Conservation Service to pilot new automation and high-tech integration of water sources and equipment.

From the pilot program, the nursery was able to maximize land use through the use of a capillary mat system or cap mats. The cap mats have reduced the amount of water pressure needed for irrigation which reduces the energy costs for pumping. They also ensured uniform watering for the crops, eliminated leaching or nutrient discharge and reduced fertilizer use by 50 percent.

Carroll Brothers Nursery continues to develop innovative plans to meet future challenges. They are working on an automated grafting machine to increase production of its gardenias as well as an onsite cistern to supply enough water for the nursery for a year.

By using less water, fertilizer, pesticide and energy, Carroll Brothers is demonstrating that sustainable agriculture can grow and thrive in Florida.

Source: FreshFromFlorida.com – 2008