



Event Speakers


Puja Batra, Ph.D. - Principal at Batra Ecological Strategies



Puja got her Ph.D. at Michigan State University in Ecology & Evolutionary Biology/Zoology and is now at Batra Ecological Strategies integrating science, policy, economics and communications for ecological solutions. She has devoted several years to resolve social and economic needs without diminishing natural resources. She has recently published 'Linking Climate-Friendly Farming Practices to San Diego County's Climate Action Plan'.




Andrew Blume, Co-Founder inHouse Produce, Inc.




Andrew is an entrepreneur, thought-leader, and community organizer of the indoor agriculture sector. Throughout his modern farming journey, Andrew has collaborated with many notable organizations including Microsoft, Philips, Ikea, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, Southern Company, Square Roots, LACI, Agritecture, Green Bronx Machine, Plenty, Crop One, and Aerofarms. A lifelong vegetarian and an AI Gore-trained climate speaker, Andrew is hungry to foster: green jobs, healthy local food, sustainable best practices, and resilient cities.



Philippe Rolshausen, Ph.D. - CE Assistant Specialist & Assistant Horticulturist



Having received his Ph.D. from the University of California, Davis, Philippe is now a Cooperative Extension Specialist at UCR. He researches biotic and abiotic factors that limit citrus, grapevine and other crops productivity to develop and implement sustainable strategies to improve crop yield and plant health. He is interested in understanding plant-microbiome interactions as part of integrated pest management.






Fortino Morales III, MPP - Sustainability Officer



During his time as an undergraduate at UCR, Fortino hosted urban gardening seminars, helped establish the sustainability engagement fund and founded the UCR community garden. He managed the garden for several years while attending UCR for a Master's in Public Policy. For his efforts at the garden he was awarded the Global Food Initiative 30 under 30. Now as the new head of the office, Fortino is creating a strong and connected network of sustainable ambassadors, reaching every crevice of UCR culture.



Darrel Jenerette, Ph.D. - Director Center for Conservation Biology and Professor in Landscape Ecology at the Department of Botany and Plant Sciences



Jenerette's research team focuses on the coupling between biodiversity, energy fluxes, and biogeochemical cycling embedded within ecological landscapes. His teams conduct research across wildland, agricultural, and urban land uses. Jenerette research include "Urban heat island and environmental justice", a project investigating the vulnerability of different neighborhoods and groups of people to negative health effects of extremely hot weather in metropolitan Phoenix and "Urban Water Innovation Network (U-WIN): Transitioning Toward Sustainable Urban Water Systems", a project focusing on advancing fundamental knowledge, building capacity, and forging collaborations needed to find technological and behavioral solutions that promote sustainable urban water systems.



Eric Focht - Staff Research Associate



Eric is a Riverside native and has dedicated himself to agricultural improvement. As a research associate Eric is involved in the UCR avocado breeding program, where he works on developing new and better varieties for commercial and home growers. In addition, he is involved in the UCR R' Garden, located next to Lot 1.

