

## Ronald Gonzalez



Ronald Gonzalez was born in the Costa Rican countryside, where he enjoyed the surrounding natural resources, farms and warmth of the rural towns' people. As a teenager, he studied in an agricultural high school and worked in farms during the summer - both of which led him to develop an interest in tropical agriculture. After high school, Ronald received a scholarship to study at the EARTH University in Costa Rica, where he learned about sustainable agricultural practices in the tropics. During his studies, Ronald developed a passion for soil study and became aware of their importance in agricultural production and natural ecosystems. As a result of his academic achievement, Ronald was selected to participate in The Gaia Camp; an international ecological symposium held in Manaus, Brazil. His research interests included evaluating the effect of soil's physical and chemical impact on the growth of banana plants, and soil's properties in relation to specific plants - which became the topics of his undergraduate thesis.

As an agronomist, Ronald has engaged in research and development on fertilizers at the Earth University and worked for the Chiquita Brands Company as a research assistant in banana production. Additionally, he assisted a small group of plantain farmers with their production and exportation. After working with large companies as well as small farmers, Ronald decided to pursue his studies further. With the help of a former professor, he was given an opportunity to work with the Soil Science Department of the University of Wisconsin-Madison where he obtained a master's degree. His research resulted in two publications: *Compost Effects on Soil Physical Properties* and *Field Nursery Production* which were published in *Compost Science and Utilization* and the *Journal of Environmental Horticulture*, respectively.

Upon returning to Costa Rica, Ronald worked as an assistant scientist in soil fertility and pineapple nutrition at the Research Department of Standard Fruit Company. During his five years as an assistant scientist, he researched ways to produce the highest economical yield while protecting natural resources. He applied to the Fulbright Program in 2006, and was selected as an International Fulbright Science and Technology Award grantee.

In fall 2007, Ronald began his Ph.D. program in soil fertility and plant nutrition at the Soil and Water Science Department at the University of Florida-Gainesville. He is currently conducting research to design more efficient and environmentally sound phosphorus fertilization practices. He believes that the concepts he has been learning will allow him to provide information not available in Costa Rica and improve agricultural systems to be more productive, profitable and above all, more sustainable.