Potato Research in the Tri-County Area. Having the 2015 annual meeting of the Florida State Horticulture Society convened in St. Augustine provided a good opportunity to highlight contributions of the Hastings Agricultural Extension Center, Hastings, Florida. This center has served the Tri-County Area (St. Johns, Putnam and Flagler Counties) since 1923, and during this 93-year period, field research has been conducted on a variety of crops. The following descriptions of current research programs for tablestock and processing potato types represent only a small portion of the studies performed at the center. An extensive history of the HAEC was previously published in the Proceedings of the FSHS (Weingartner, DP and DR Hensel. 2003. 116:143-151).

Front cover.
Top—Potato flowers from the University of Florida Potato Research Program, Potato Variety Evaluation Program at the HAEC. The Program tests potato clones from university, government, and industry breeding programs for Florida’s growing conditions. Annually more than 1,500 potato clones are evaluated for yield and quality.
Bottom—In 2012, USDA and UF jointly released ‘Elkton’ as a new processing potato cultivar adapted to Florida conditions and resistant to internal heat necrosis (a serious problem for Florida growers). ‘Elkton’ has been tested at HAEC since 1998 and in cooperation with local growers since 2011. ‘Elkton’ was named after the little berg in potato country in St. Johns County.

Back cover.
Top row—Visible differences in potato plant color are apparent in this nitrogen fertilizer rate study.
Middle row—Long-term research in nutrient and irrigation management for potatoes and other vegetable crops has been the focus of several graduate student projects, resulting in development of guidelines for Best Management Practices. One doctoral student (left) evaluates nitrogen fertilizer rate and timing of application, while another (right) installs soil moisture sensor probes that provide reliable data for irrigation research.
Bottom row—(left, top and bottom) Swollen lenticels develop under saturated soil conditions. If not sorted out during packing they remain unsightly and become sunken during storage and shipping. (middle) Extensive studies with widely grown tablestock potatoes have quantified the extent of injuries during commercial handling and developed guidelines for minimizing development of storage disorders. (right) Hastings Agricultural Extension Center provides support to area potato growers on crop management, disease and weed control. Here a grower evaluates seed potato viability.

Text and photos courtesy of Steven Sargent, Lincoln Zotarelli, and Mildred Makani.