



### **2003 Oliver Atkin Award**

#### **Gary Bender**

*University of California, Cooperative Extension, San Diego County*

Award presented by Dr. Mary Lu Arpaia & Dr. Peggy Mauk.

The Oliver Atkins award was initiated in 1996, and has been given to an array of people for their contributions to the propagation of avocados. Some of the awardees have been experts in the actual propagation and breeding of new varieties, while others have been honored for work with rootstocks. Past awardees include Bill Frey and Gray Martin. In 1998 the foremen of the commercial avocado nurseries were honored. Other awardees include Greg Partida, Alvyn Lypps, George Zentmyer, and Julie Frink.

The person we are honoring this year has been active in the avocado industry for over twenty years. He received his formal education at the University of California. During his career he has been involved in everything from educational projects to diligent research.

This individual has shown great enthusiasm for his job and for the sharing of information. Just before he replaced Don Gustafson, as he was completing the requirements for his Ph.D., he broke both thumbs playing softball. He typed his dissertation and began his new job with a cast on each hand. Once he sets a goal, he will focus his efforts to achieve it regardless of the obstacles. He has shown wonderful commitment over the years to his job with the Cooperative Extension. More recently he has been the principal contributor to the newly revised *Handbook for Avocado Growers*.

It is a pleasure to present this year's Oliver Atkins Award to Dr. Gary Bender.