Corona Foothill lemon is the most frequently planted lemon in Arizona, but is not commonly grown in California. In 2006, Wright and Kahn initiated a desert lemon trial at the Coachella Valley Agricultural Research Station (CVARS) near Thermal, California. The first summary of results comparing 12 lemon cultivars for freeze tolerance, tree growth based on canopy volume, fruit yield and earliness was published in the winter 2014 issue of Citrograph (Wright et al. 2014). An update on this trial published in Citrograph in the summer of 2015 presented results through 2014 of experimental and commercial fruit pack-out for the trial, exterior and interior fruit quality data, nutrient issues and fruit storage life for the 12 lemon cultivars (Kahn et al. 2015).

Among the 12 lemon cultivars in the trial, Corona Foothills demonstrated excellent exterior fruit quality, average juice content, high seed count, high peel thickness and average peel smoothness. The fruit had good size, were relatively early in maturity and had the best first harvest yield and next-to-best total yield and returns with excellent cumulative yield. These positive attributes initiated interest by growers in obtaining budwood of this cultivar.

Although there was a registered bud source of Corona Foothill at Young’s Nursery in Thermal, California, which was also the budwood source for the Desert Lemon trial at CVARS, there was no CCPP Variety Introduction source of this cultivar. Young’s Nursery had obtained their original budwood source from Willatts & Newcomb, Inc. (Lyn Citrus Seed, Inc.) many years ago. In 2014, Lyn Citrus Seed, Arvin, California, sent budwood of the original Foothill Lisbon lemon to the CCPP, which became part of the Early Release Budwood program as VI 868 in November 2016. Even though VI 868 is probably not a true Lisbon lemon, the Willatts and Newcomb records refer to it as Foothill Lisbon. For historical reasons, the CCPP has kept this name.

In summer 2014, a grower group visiting the CVARS Desert Lemon trial assisted Kahn in selecting budwood of Corona Foothill lemon from the trial that was sent to the CCPP. This budwood source was selected from the best performing Corona Foothill tree in the trial, based on yield and health of the tree, and will become part of the Early Release program as VI 871, also starting in November 2016.

Foothill Lisbon and Corona Foothill are both limb sport selections of Villafranca, which was introduced into Florida from Europe by H. S. Sandford in about 1875 and into California soon after that (Webber 1943). According to Webber, Villafranca belongs to the Eureka type and was very similar to Eureka, except producing larger and more vigorous trees with somewhat denser foliage and more thorns. Hodgson (1967) described Villafranca as having fruit that is indistinguishable from Eureka lemon fruit, but with tree characteristics similar to Lisbon, such as bearing more fruit on the inside of the tree, which may explain the confusion about the naming of this cultivar.