

Seeds

Department of Horticulture

Volume 19
2012

Greetings from the Department of Horticulture

Greetings all alumni and friends! As always, it has been a very busy year around Saunders Hall. A whirlwind tour of this past year begins with our seventh annual Garden Gala festival at the Hahn Horticulture Garden last June. The “Lucky Seven” theme was very popular and everyone had a great time playing the Las Vegas-style games of chance. This year’s Garden Gala is June 9 and the theme is “Key West.” Last summer, Donna Long retired from her administrative assistant position after a career of making a real difference in the lives of our students. Maura Wood moved into the position vacated by Donna and Ashley Wills was hired to fill Maura’s former position. Fall semester began with a first-ever (at least in recent memory) meeting of all undergraduate students, where we explained our new curriculum and our overall departmental culture of service and scholarship. All students were given a horticulture T-shirt and a drawing was held for a new iPad, generously donated by Steve and Juanita Grigg of Grigg Designs in Manassas. The fall highlight was the trip led by Robert McDuffie to garden centers and botanical gardens in Washington, Philadelphia, and New York. The group even attended a Broadway musical! In October, we celebrated the life of our first department head, William Bradford Alwood. The oak he planted around 1895—only 3 years after the founding of our

department (then the Horticulture, Mycology, and Entomology department)—was dedicated as the Alwood Oak. The young seedling he planted is now the large oak at the edge of the drill field in front of Burruss Hall. In February, the Horticulture Club’s Valentine Day rose sale helped finance the PLANET student career days and competition trip to Kansas State University. The trip was in March, and the Hort Hokies came in ninth out of 62 schools from around the country. Earlier in March, we welcomed Susan Clark to our Blacksburg faculty as an associate professor of horticulture. Still to come this spring is the Horticulture Club banquet, the spring plant sale, and, of course, graduation. The traditions continue! You can keep up with the year’s events as they unfold by receiving our monthly e-newsletter. If you are not receiving it, please let me know (rharris@vt.edu), and I will add you to the email list.



With kind regards,
Roger Harris
Department Head

Give to the Department of Horticulture

The history of horticulture at Virginia Tech extends back to the very first university classes offered in 1872. Each and every graduate and friend of the department is part of that history. Whether you spent time with us as an undergraduate or graduate, or have come to know us later in life, we are glad to have you share in horticulture at Virginia Tech. While we are grateful for the state funding we receive, private support is absolutely essential for us to move forward and keep the university an innovative leader in horticulture education, research, and engagement. Your support is important to us, and we work

hard to be responsible stewards of your gifts—both your gifts of time and your financial gifts. There are many ways you can make a difference in our programs. If you would like additional information about specific giving opportunities, or to hear about the department’s plans for the future, please contact me or development officer Ben Grove (540-231-7640; begrove@vt.edu) at any time.

With thanks for many great friends,
J. Roger Harris, rharris@vt.edu 540-231-5451



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Alumni Spotlight: David L. Seward ('85 M.S.)

In 1981, David Seward earned a B.S. in biology from Old Dominion University (ODU) and married Susan Garnett. David and Susan have two daughters, Kesley, 24, and Ryan, 21. During his senior year at ODU, he realized that he had a calling for the plant world. So in 1981, he entered Virginia Tech to pursue a master's degree in horticulture; he earned this degree in 1985. While at Virginia Tech, he fulfilled an interest in plants with a focus on food production and worked with Dr. Ron Morse on no-till vegetable production. He has fond memories of the farm work he and Dr. Morse undertook. While pursuing his master's degree, he enrolled in several undergraduate horticulture classes to better prepare himself for a horticultural career. After leaving Tech, he worked for Southern Branch Nursery in Chesapeake, Va. In 1990, he went to work for Strange's Florists, Greenhouses, and Garden Centers in Richmond, and later for Glenwood Nurseries. He started teaching horticulture classes at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College (JSRCC) in 1993 as an adjunct instructor and realized that he had a love and passion for teaching. In 1995, he began teaching at the Richmond Technical Center as the project coordinator/instructor, and he became a full time assistant professor at JSRCC in 1998.



Despite his love for the teaching profession, Seward's need to better provide for his family led him to work with Mike Hildebrand at James River Nurseries. In 2005, he left JSRCC to start his own business, Garden Creations, a landscape contracting business focusing on fine garden design, installation, and maintenance. He returned to JSRCC in 2006 as program head of the horticulture department. He still maintains his private business but thoroughly enjoys his JSRCC work.

The horticulture program's courses at JSRCC include Landscape Design, Plant Production, Floral Design (David Pippin, a Tech alumnus, teaches those classes), Landscape and Turf Management, and Sustainable Agriculture. In September 2010, Scott Burrell, a forestry graduate from Tech, was hired to assist him with the greenhouses and gardens.

Seward also actively participates in the Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association's Beautiful Gardens Program. His challenge for the next few years is to promote and build up JSRCC's Sustainable Agriculture program, which ties him back to his master's project. Seward says he feels lucky to have a vegetable garden at his 25-acre home in Montpelier with his wife. He is one of the fortunate ones whose vocation is the same as his avocation. Seward said that his, "time and education at Virginia Tech have served me well."

Susan Clark receives multiple awards

Susan Clark, associate professor of horticulture and director of civic agriculture and food systems, previously worked in the Department of Human Nutrition, Foods and Exercise. It was there that she founded and directed the cross-college Civic Agriculture and Food Systems program. This innovative program allows students to minor in civic agriculture while majoring in something else – like Horticulture!



Clark will continue to direct the minor and to teach several key classes developed as essential components of the minor. As an associate professor of horticulture, she will help build the sustainable foods component of environmental horticulture, advise undergraduate and graduate students, and collaborate with a new faculty member in sustainable food production.

The civic agriculture and food system enables students to identify, examine, and incorporate sustainable agriculture and food system philosophy and activities into personal and professional practice through theoretical and practical study. Collaborations among faculty, dining services, Heifer International, and the YMCA give students hands-on experience specific to sustainable food and agriculture. Students practice organic gardening; deliver and serve their produce to the university's dining services; work with Virginians in local gardens; and participate in service learning and study abroad with the nongovernmental organization, Heifer International, a charity that works to provide farm animals to poor countries. Clark has been recognized as Engaged Scholar of the Month by the Office of Outreach and International Affairs for leadership on the civic agriculture curriculum and leading students on alternative spring breaks domestically and internationally with Heifer International to learn about sustainable agriculture development. The Office of the Vice President for Research also has recognized her as Scholar

See Clark, pg. 6

Hahn Horticulture Garden News

Garden Interns – Summer 2011

We enjoyed the help of a couple of terrific interns this past summer, and in return, they received valuable hands-on experience in almost all phases of public horticulture. Jacob Chance was the inaugural recipient of the Mike and Susie Hildebrand Garden Landscape Internship, and Drew Foy was the M. Evan Gardener Endowment Intern for 2012. As a bonus for this year's interns, the garden provided some career-expanding opportunities. We funded Foy's trip to the American Public Garden Association's conference in Philadelphia. Chance graciously held down the fort for us all (no small task in the middle of summer) and got an expense-paid trip to attend the Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association's annual field day and winery tour/dinner at Ingleside Plantation.

Chance is from Woodstock, Va., and is a senior in landscape contracting. His career interests include land restoration and reclamation. He's happiest when outside and has become an absolute pro on the garden's zero-turn radius mower.

Foy is from the Hampton Roads area. He has many career interests; narrowing them down has been the hardest part. He already has a bachelor's degree in animal science and is now a junior in environmental horticulture. As a result of his garden internship and attendance at the APGA conference, Foy is now considering public horticulture as a career.



Garden Lotus by John McCormick

A Fond Farewell to Donna Long

We sadly had to admit that even our best friends and treasured employees deserve to retire as we said goodbye to **Donna Long** last year. Donna worked in our department for more than 25 years and ushered countless students through the academic minefields on their journey through Virginia Tech. For the past three years, Donna served as our executive administrative assistant while retaining her former assignment as chief administrative assistant for our undergraduate program. We will very much miss her positive outlook, outstanding service, energy, and laughter. Donna can be contacted at: donna@vt.edu

New Staff

We welcome Lisa Lipsey as our newest staff horticulturist. Lisa is filling the position previously held by Dabney Blanton. Dabney returned to graduate school in fall 2011 and is currently pursuing a master's degree in counseling at Radford University. Lisa and her husband owned and operated Mill Brook Landscaping for many years. She has more than 25 years of experience in landscape design and maintenance, as well as growing containerized perennials and woody plants. Her horticulturist position with the garden is currently part time, as she also serves as the Extension program coordinator for Virginia's Beautiful Gardens plant introduction program.

8th Annual Garden Gala – June 9, 2012

Join us for this year's Key West-themed gala! We'll have delicious hors d'oeuvres and two open bars, featuring a very special Garden Gala Margarita. There will be silent auction items to tempt you, as well as a special live auction. The gala is topped off with Roanoke's fabulous Key West Band. We promise a tropical night to remember! The Garden Gala is our most important fundraiser of the year and it enables us to hire student workers, add more plants, and continue to grow. Honorary hosts for this Gala will be Steve Grigg ('76) and Juanita Grigg, owners of Grigg Design, Inc., in Manassas Park. The Griggs have been tremendous supporters of the department and the garden. For ticket information, please visit www.hort.vt.edu/hhg, call 540-231-5970, or email vtgarden@vt.edu. For information on sponsorship opportunities that can benefit the garden (includes complimentary tickets), contact Holly Scoggins, garden director, at perennials@vt.edu or call 540-231-5783.

Welcome Ashley Wills

We welcome a new administrative staff member, Ashley Wills! Ashley is from Giles County and is rejoining the department, having previously worked in the Horticulture Department from '08-'09. She and her husband have a two-year-old daughter, Madison, and another daughter is on the way.



Alumni News

2010 – 2012

Paul Hutcheson (B.S. '11) owns Windmill Heights Garden Center, a wholesale and retail greenhouse operation in Culpeper, Va. Paul bought the business in 2012 from his grandfather, Mason Hutcheson, who is also a Virginia Tech alumnus. The business was started in 1962 and has grown to include 12 greenhouses totaling 20,000 square feet of growing space. The primary crops are annual bedding plants, hanging baskets, vegetable transplants, herbs, and other flowering annuals. The business, with the help of three full-time employees, ships to wholesale customers within a 75-mile radius and also sells retail from their greenhouse. For more information, call 540-407-0902, or find his business on Facebook — just search for “Windmill Heights Garden Center.”

2000 – 2009

Rachel Bailey Lyons (B.S. '02) is employed by Great American Landscapes in Landscape Design and Sales, Clarksburg, Md. She married in 2005 and had a daughter in 2007. She lives in Frederick, Md.

r_e_bailey@yahoo.com

Jake Browder (B.S. '03, M.S. '04) Since returning from the Peace Corps in the Dominion Republic, Jake has become a soil conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service based in Smithfield, Va. He has started a business on the side called Browder's Fresh Pickins, selling hanging baskets, cut flowers, bedding plants, and vegetables. He and his wife, Amanda, are expecting a baby girl in April and would like to wish everyone their best.

<http://browdersfreshpickins.blogspot.com>

Dan Ward (Ph.D. '04) is working as an extension specialist in Pomology at Rutgers University, stationed in the “wilds of New Jersey” — the Rutgers Agricultural Research and Extension Center in southern New Jersey. He and his wife, Teresa, have a daughter named Sylvia, meaning “of the forest” because of their love of the forest.



Dan and Teresa Ward's daughter, Sylvia.

Dan Trocher (B.S. '06) is an enhancement manager at Ruppert Landscape in Frederick, Md. He took time off last year to “thru-hike” the Appalachian Trail. He lives in Baltimore, Md.

dtrocher@ruppertcompanies.com

Dan L. Schellenberg (M.S. '06) is a graduate student researcher in the Department of Viticulture & Enology, Robert Mondavi Institute at the University of California, Davis. He is a Ph.D. candidate in Horticulture and Agronomy and working on nitrogen-use and greenhouse gases in California almonds. He expects to graduate in June 2013. He and his wife have one son and are expecting another baby in early 2012. They live in Berkeley, Calif.

dschel@ucdavis.edu

Brent Clayton (B.S. '07) received his master's degree in water management and hydrological science at Texas A&M. He is working in Corpus Christi, Texas, for the Extension Service educating the public on stormwater management and water conservation. He still uses his horticulture background by making presentations on rain gardens and plant selection.

jbclayton@ag.tamu.edu

1990 – 1999

Kevin Bower (B.S. '97) is working at Columbia Green, an eco-roof company in Portland, Ore.

kevinb@columbia-green.com

Vivian Whorley (B.S. '98, Ag Ed '00) retired from Mepkin Abbey Botanical Garden & Monastery in June 2011. She started an apprenticeship in January 2012 at the Gaiananda (Earth-Bliss) Herbal Foundations Apprenticeship Program. She will be studying herbal medicine under Pat Harpell, Clinical Herbalist and Director of the newly founded South Carolina Herbal Society.

<http://scherbalsociety.com/aboutus.html>

vwhorley@gmail.com

Passing of John McClane

John McClane (M.S. '80, Ph.D. agronomy '85) passed away as the result of an in-home accident on June 27, 2011. He worked in horticulture as a research analyst at Crow's Hybrid Corn Company, a seed genetics firm.

Faculty and Staff Awards

Mickey Hayes and Brian Jackson Awarded Outstanding Alumnus Award

Every year, each department in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences recognizes an outstanding 10-year-plus alumnus and a recent alumnus who graduated within the past 10 years. The horticulture 10-year-plus Alumnus of the Year for 2012 is **Mickey Hayes**, B.S. '64, and the Recent Alumnus of the Year for 2012 is **Brian Jackson**, Ph.D. '08. They both have an impressive list of accomplishments, and we are proud to say that they bestow great honor to the Department of Horticulture. Thanks Mickey and Brian for serving as accomplished ambassadors of our department.



Mickey Hayes, center, receives an award from Dean Alan Grant, left, and Department Head Roger Harris.



Brian Jackson, center, receives an award from Dean Alan Grant, left, and Department Head Roger Harris.

Roger Harris Awarded VNLA Professional of the Year Award

Roger Harris, professor and department head, was the 2012 awardee of the Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association Professional of the Year Award. This award was presented to him at the January meeting of the VNLA's annual business meeting in Baltimore. Prior to the presentation, a long list of Harris' accolades were read including his numerous research accomplishments and publications, and his long-time service to students and the industry.

Tony Wolf Awarded the CALS Andy Swiger Land-Grant Award

Tony D. Wolf of Winchester, Va., received the 2011 Andy Swiger Land-Grant Award for his contributions to the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Virginia Tech. Wolf is the director of the Alson H. Smith Jr. Agricultural Research and Extension Center in Winchester.



Established to reward creative achievement and commitment to the college, the award recognizes faculty members whose accomplishments in teaching, research, or Extension greatly benefit the agriculture industry and improve the quality of life for Virginians. Due in part to Wolf's Extension and applied research efforts, the Virginia grape and wine industry has seen remarkable growth and achieved national recognition. In 1987, Virginia's grape production consisted of 1100 acres, and there were 35 wineries. Today, Virginia is the sixth-largest wine-grape-producing state in the country, with about 3000 acres in production and more than 180 wineries. The industry's economic impact on the commonwealth totaled \$742 million in 2010.

Wolf has conducted extensive research on cultivar selection; organized more than 100 state, regional, or international workshops and short courses; and provided leadership to both state and national organizations. In 1996, he wrote the award-winning publication, *The Mid-Atlantic Winegrape Grower's Guide*, and in 2008, he co-authored and edited the *Wine Grape Production Guide for Eastern North America*.

Clark, from pg. 2

of the Week for her collaborative research with students on electronic portfolios. Last year, Clark was the recipient of Sigma Alpha's 2011 Ag Women of the Year Award for her remarkable interest and dedication to disciplines dealing with agriculture.

Clark's current research funding through the United States Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture focuses on food security and food systems within the South-Atlantic Appalachian Region food shed. Through local food system research, education, and extension programs, Clark and an interdisciplinary team of Virginia Tech faculty, collaborators from West Virginia University and North Carolina State University, and a network of NGOs are working to enhance food security and regional food economies.



Send information to:

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Alumni Information Form

The Virginia Tech Department of Horticulture would like to have current information on your activities and accomplishments. Please complete this form to let us know where you are and what you're doing.

Name: _____ Year and Degree: _____

Home Address: _____

Employer: _____ Current Job Title: _____

Work Address: _____ E-mail Address: _____

News about Yourself (attach additional pages as needed): _____

