

Seeds

Department of Horticulture

Volume 17
2010

Greetings from the Department of Horticulture

Greetings all alumni and friends! It is our time of year, when horticulturists are on the move with the long anticipated spectacle of spring upon us. It was truly a stunning winter here in Blacksburg, but I for one am ready to get out in the garden!

We have had a very positive year in the department. First of all, we welcomed Alan Grant as the new dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences in fall 2009. Dean Grant came to us from Purdue University, where he headed their animal sciences department. He brings a lot of energy and enthusiasm to the college, and we can anticipate a bright future for CALS.

We are also very excited about some changes in store for our undergraduate curriculum. Students will still receive a B.S. in horticulture, but they will now select one of two majors. We will strengthen our current Landscape Contracting option by upgrading it to a major. We have submitted a proposal for a class (appropriately called Landscape Contracting) that specifically deals with bids and contracts, job engineering, current issues, and other related topics. Our current Establishment and Maintenance class will have a much-enhanced site assessment component. We will also add more business classes, and students will graduate with a minor in entrepreneurship from our Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics. Our other major will be called Environmental Horticulture and will offer a focus in sustainable vegetable and fruit production, the green industry, or horticultural science.

In conjunction with the development of the two majors, we have submitted proposals for many new or newly reworked

classes. Besides the Landscape Contracting class, these include Plants and Greenspaces in Urban Communities, Globalization and Horticulture, Global Seminar (online), Vegetable Seed Production (online), Medicinal Plants and Herbs, Foodsheds and Sustainability, Small Fruit Production (online), Viticulture (online), Organic Vegetable Production I and II, and labs. In addition, we have combined the Nursery Crops and the Floriculture Crops classes into one class called Ornamental Plant Production and Marketing.

We expect these changes to stimulate our department by attracting motivated students. Despite the economic downturn, all graduates have been receiving good job offers. We currently have 86 undergraduate students, down somewhat from this time last year. Our graduate student numbers are up, however: We currently have 14 master's degree and 15 Ph.D. students. In addition, we advise eight online master's of agriculture and life sciences students.

Please let us hear from you! We would love to know what you are up to. I am currently e-mailing a monthly newsletter; let me know if you are not receiving it (rharris@vt.edu).

With kind regards,

Roger Harris
Department Head



Alumni Spotlight: Mickey Hayes

Mickey Hayes was indoctrinated into the horticultural realm by growing up around his dad's Virginia Beach nursery business. He graduated from the Department of Horticulture in 1964 with a concentration in ornamental horticulture and landscape design. Since that time, no grass has grown under his feet.

Following graduation, Hayes was employed in the landscape architecture field until the early 1970s. His entrepreneurial spirit then led him to real estate development and sales in the Beech Mountain and Sugar Mountain areas of western North Carolina, and at Bald Head Island near Wilmington, N.C. In 1976, he moved to the Outer Banks where he developed resort communities as president and operating manager of Kitty Hawk Land Company until 2008. Hayes was captivated by the exciting opportunities in real estate development and excelled in his efforts. Many of his community development projects have won awards. His Currituck Club development in Corolla, N.C., was cited by the prestigious Urban Land Institute and is used as a case study in the institute's *Golf Course Development in Residential Communities* instructional handbook. He retired in 2008 and spends much of his time at homes in the Bahamas and Blacksburg.

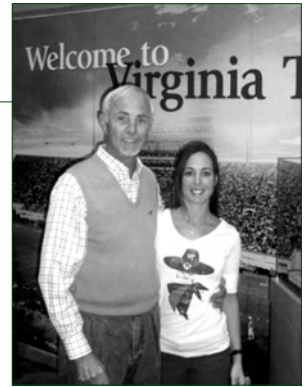
Hayes retained his "green thumb" enthusiasm from his nursery and academic years. He takes a great interest in plants and landscape architecture and applies it to his Bahamas and Blacksburg landscapes.

He is also a diehard Hokie and an enthusiastic supporter of our athletic teams. He is a member of the President's Circle – a distinguished group of individuals whose lifetime contributions to the university total \$1 million or more – and is one of the major contributors to the Skelton Conference Center. More recently, Hayes became a major donor to the new Basketball Practice Facility; a training room there bears his name. Hayes serves on the board of directors of the Virginia Tech Athletic Fund. He has donated more than \$1 million to Virginia Tech athletics.

Since 2005, Hayes has shared his life with Sarah Franklin (see photo) and is "as happy as can be." In addition to landscape horticulture, his hobbies are old cars, shelling, and marlin fishing.

Hayes' personal advice to students is 1) "Diversify"; 2) "Have fun with your friends here, for they will truly be your friends for life"; and 3) "For sure, do not worry about the economy and the job market right now – make the best of it – because it will change for the better and you will have 20, 30, 40 years or more to excel. Just imagine what's going to happen for you in the next 40 years."

We in the horticulture department are proud of Mickey Hayes' accomplishments and success.



Mickey Hayes with Sarah Franklin.

Red Carpet Gala Celebrates 25th Anniversary of the Hahn Horticulture Garden

By Holly Scoggins, Associate Professor, Department of Horticulture Director, Hahn Horticulture Garden

Our fifth annual Garden Gala, held on June 1, 2009, was everything you'd want in a party: elegant yet fun, with good food, good drinks, smooth jazz, and great people. Our theme was Red Carpet Gala, celebrating the silver anniversary of the garden's 1984 founding. Alumni from the Department of Horticulture were especially well-represented this year in terms of sponsorships and attendance. Many also generously donated plants and other items to the silent auction; our guests were delighted at the quality and variety of items this year. The gala was very successful: we welcomed 270 guests and raised \$15,300.

The garden's founding fathers – Robert Lyons, former horticulture department faculty member and garden director; and Robert McDuffie, current faculty – served as special guest hosts, and they went all out, tuxes included. Bob and Robert enjoyed reconnecting with the many alumni in attendance and had everyone in stitches during the short program.

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Robert McDuffie and Robert Lyons share recollections of the garden's early days. (Photo by Jim Stroup.)

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The funds raised this year were especially critical. With the rapid expansion of the garden over the last few years to almost 6 acres, the addition of another horticulturist was imperative. As with most of our efforts, the only way we could accomplish this was to generate funds for a salary, making a successful gala even more essential. Thank you again to our horticulture alums, representatives of the green industry, and community folks who sponsored, donated items, and attended our gala. You are a part of something wonderful!

Please mark your calendars for this year's gala on June 12. More information is on our website: www.hort.vt.edu/hhg. Contact Holly Scoggins at perennials@vt.edu or 540-231-5783 to learn more about sponsorship opportunities (complimentary tickets provided). Ask anyone who's attended – it's a great reason to come back and enjoy Blacksburg in the summer!



Dabney Blanton, garden horticulturist, and Margaret Tackett, floriculture research intern, greeted guests with chilled champagne in commemorative glasses. (Photo by Jim Stroup.)

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Hahn Horticulture Garden – Red Carpet Gala Sponsors

Thank you so much to our generous sponsors! Please consider sponsoring next year – you'll receive complimentary tickets plus our deepest appreciation!

Platinum (\$2000)

Bennett's Creek Nursery – Wayne Sawyer, Suffolk, Va.,
 (757) 483-1425, www.bcnursery.com

Gold (\$1000)

Aztec Rental Center Inc.
 Blacksburg, Va., (540) 552-7474, www.aztecrental.com

Jeff Francis, Hardy, Va.

Longwood Graduate Program in Public Horticulture –
 Robert E. Lyons, Director, Newark, Del.

Strange's Florists, Greenhouses, and Garden Centers –
 Bill Gouldin, Richmond, Va., (804) 321-2200, www.stranges.com

Silver (\$500)

Grigg Design Inc. – Steve and Juanita Grigg
 Manassas Park, Va., (703) 368-7539, www.gdiva.com

James River Nurseries Inc. – Mike Hildebrand, Ashland, Va.,
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Dawn and Gary Lerch, Midlothian, Va.

David Pippin Inc. – David O. Pippin, Richmond, Va.,
 (804) 278-9006, www.davidpippin.biz

Southern Landscape Group Inc. – Mark Maslow
 Evington, Va., (434) 821-6004, www.soscapes.com

Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association – Jeff Miller,
 Executive Director, Christiansburg, Va., (800) 476-0055,
www.vnla.org

Bronze (\$250):

Brookmeade Sod Farm Inc. – Louis and Ginger Brooking
 Doswell, Va., (804) 883-6338, www.brookmeadesod.com

I.V. Tree Care – Jim May, Radford, Va., (540) 320-4911

Mary and Jim Marchant, Blacksburg, Va.

Saunders Brothers Inc. – Piney River, Va., (434) 277-5455,
www.saundersbrothers.com

Stonewall Construction LLC – Eliot Clark, Ashland, Va.,
 (804) 869-6600

Sonya Lepper Westervelt and Paul Westervelt, Roseland, Va.

Willow Springs Tree Farms – Greg Miller,
 Radford, Va., (540) 731-3300, www.willowsprings.com

Mike Woods & Associates Inc. – Mike and Dottie Woods,
 Blacksburg, Va.

Alumni News

1990-1999

Kelly Wilson ('99) is a horticulturist at Arlington National Cemetery, where she has worked for two years. Previously, she spent six years working as a gardener at Hillwood Museum & Gardens. She recently purchased a condo in Falls Church, Va.
Kelly.wilson11@conus.army.mil

Jennifer Horn ('96) started her own landscape architecture office, Jennifer Horn Landscape Architecture (*jenniferghorn.com*). She has worked in New York for the past 11 years in the design office at the Bronx Zoo and for the Waterfront & Open Space Division of the New York City Planning Department, but her primary work has been in high-end estate design. Jennifer will offer landscape architectural design services for public and private projects. She will continue teaching plant identification for Columbia University's masters in landscape design program, where she has taught since 2005. *jennifer.g.horn@gmail.com*

Thea Edwards ('91) is an assistant research professor at Tulane University. Since graduating from Virginia Tech, Thea finished a master's degree in botany and environmental horticulture at the University of Florida, with a minor in science education. In 2005, she completed a Ph.D. in zoology, also at the University of Florida. Her dissertation investigated the effects of environmental contaminants on mosquitofish life history. Two chapters examined nitrogen contamination in Florida springs. Thea is currently studying environmental signaling from a different perspective, taking her back to her horticulture roots. She is using the symbiotic relationship between legumes and their nitrogen-fixing bacteria as a model to understand how pesticides, fertilizers, and other contaminants might be changing symbiotic nitrogen fixation. She has chosen this research direction because it has important implications for sustainable agriculture – an area of research where she hopes to make considerable contributions. Over the past two years, she also developed a science research mentoring program for graduate and undergraduate students (*www.biology.ufl.edu/hhmi/*). The program was funded by Howard Hughes Medical Institute. *tedward@tulane.edu*

1980-1989

Shawn Rodgers ('89) is the owner/president of Chestnut Ridge Landscape Co., which he started in spring 2008. His first two years of business have been successful. Shawn, his wife Lori, and daughter Natalie live in Latrobe, Pa. *srodgers12@msn.com*

Paige Moody ('85) is president of Arbor Enterprises Inc., which is entering its 19th year as a landscape contracting business in North Carolina's Research Triangle area. She lives in Pittsboro, N.C. *arborent@aol.com*

Timothy Sanford ('84) is president of Carville Landscape Co. He and his wife Nicole live in Warsaw, Va. *tim@carvillelandscape.com*

1970-1979

William Watson ('79) has 18 years of service as roadside manager for the Culpeper District of the Virginia Department of Transportation. He oversees all vegetation matters in the medians and rights-of-way. He is a Certified Arborist, a commercial pesticide applicator in five categories, a Certified Erosion and Siltation Inspector, and a Virginia contracts officer. He and his wife Mary (Virginia Tech class of 1972) have two daughters, both graduates of the College of William and Mary. They live in Culpeper, Va.

John Wysolmerski (M.S. '79) is an assistant sales director for Doeblers Hybrids Inc. He is the senior sales agronomist and assistant sales director in Pennsylvania, managing biotech seed sales in the state, and he is in charge of district sales managers. He and his wife Jane have been married for 30 years. They have two children, Michael (23 years old) and Erin (18 years old) and live in Birdsboro, Pa. *hwysolme@doeblers.com*

Mark Holdren ('79) co-owns Green Seasons Nursery in Parrish, Fla. The nursery specializes in native (to Florida and the Southeastern United States) plants for beach/shoreline restoration, including sea oats and other grasses and native palms. He and his wife Lori live in Bradenton, Fla. They attended the 2010 Orange Bowl where they celebrated the Hokies' victory. *seaoater@aol.com*

Ed Milhous (M.S. '76) is employed by TreesPlease and serves as president of the American Society of Consulting Arborists. He is also a member of the Virginia Tech Department of Forestry Advisory Board. He is married to Roberta Ainsley, who graduated from Virginia Tech in 1973, and lives in Haymarket, Va. *ed@treesplease.com*

Robert Trower ('72) is an environmental specialist for water quality at the Fredericksburg District of the Virginia Department of Transportation. He and his wife Wanda live in Farnham, Va. They have two daughters: Kristin is a 2003 graduate of Virginia Tech in mechanical engineering, and Mallory is in her third year at JMU. *Robert.Trower@VDOT.Virginia.gov*

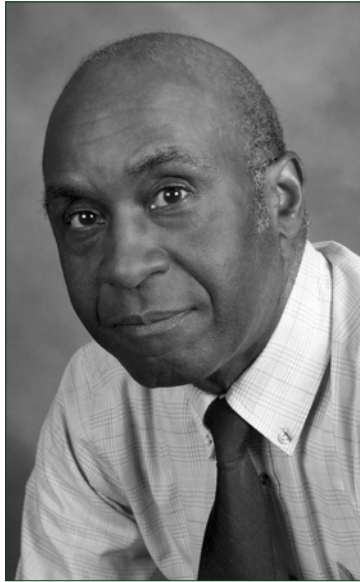
1950-1959

John L. Frierson (M.S. '53) is retired. He received the first master's degree in ornamental horticulture at Virginia Tech. He also earned a Ph.D. in biology in 1960 and an M.A. in history in 2000 at the University of South Carolina. John has many good memories of Virginia Tech. He and his wife Estelle live in Lexington, S.C.

Retirements

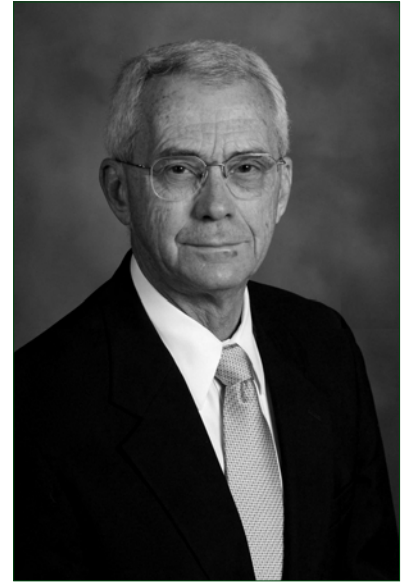
Jerry Williams

Over the past 27 years, virtually every horticulture student and many nonmajor students have benefitted from the pedagogical skills of Jerry Williams. From Fundamentals of Hort Production through Small Fruit Production, and later through Environmental Factors, Wines and Vines, Fruit Crops, and Hort Seminar, he has taught, teased, prodded, and applauded our students. For most of his tenure, Williams also taught and coordinated the Indoor Plants class, during which he helped many graduate students overcome their stage fright in preparation for their future teaching roles. His teaching excellence has been recognized by the Southern Region ASHS and by NACTA. Throughout his career, one of Williams' greatest pleasures was advising students; his skill in this endeavor was recently recognized with his receipt of the Career Advising Award from Virginia Tech. Although Williams officially retired as of July 2008, he remains in Blacksburg and can be reached at williamj@vt.edu.



Robert Wright

Robert Wright retired in July 2009 after 36 years of service to Virginia Tech. Wright's research activities focused on developing nursery/greenhouse production practices that maximize plant growth and minimize costly inputs (e.g., fertilizer, container substrates). His research findings have greatly impacted not only the Virginia nursery/greenhouse industry but the U.S. industry as well, resulting in a stellar national and international reputation and recognition. Wright's many research accomplishments are documented by more than 90 refereed journal articles. Of most significance was the development of a soil-testing method for container-grown plants that is widely used around the world in commercial nurseries as well as in the scientific community. He recently pioneered the use of pine tree (wood) substrates (PTS) for container-grown plants to replace the conventional pine bark substrate that is becoming quite expensive and less available.



These efforts have resulted in numerous prestigious awards; most recently he was awarded the 2009 College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Research Award and the 2009 Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association Distinguished Professional of the Year Award. In addition to his research activities, Wright taught the Nursery Crops course for many years and served as department head for 11 years.

Wright is multi-talented. He took the lead role in the challenging construction of the lovely Jane Andrews Memorial Stream Garden at the Hahn Horticulture Garden. The stream garden is more than 200 feet long – complete with a spectacular waterfall, huge boulders, bridge, and deck. The stream garden is one of the most popular sites on campus for students and staff to spend an enchanting break between classes and meetings. Wright continues his PTS research and mentors graduate students even in his retirement. However, he appreciates the additional time his retirement affords to dote on his grandchildren.

We in the horticulture department have benefitted from his wisdom, work ethic, and congeniality.

Passing of Jim Faiszt

Jim Faiszt passed away in June 2009. Jim was a much beloved professor in the Department of Horticulture from 1963 to 1988. During this time, he taught courses in landscape design, landscape appreciation, woody plants, and floral design. After his retirement, Jim kept in close contact with the department, making sure to attend the yearly barbeques and monthly birthday get-togethers. He was a most amiable fellow with a quick wit, engaging personality, and kindness toward all he met. We truly miss him.

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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): _____

