

Department of Horticulture

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Greetings students, Alumni, and Friends! As promised, our trip to the PLANET Student Career Days is featured in this month's mailing. The Hort Hokies were a dominant force! The 40-student-strong group was organized and lead by **Robert McDuffie**, and **Holly Scoggins** and **Tom Martin** accompanied the students as additional faculty advisors. The trip was made possible by the kind contributions of several industry friends and alumni. We are very grateful for your support! I am also very pleased to announce that **Jim Owen** has accepted our offer as Nursery Crops Specialist at the Hampton roads AREC in Virginia Beach. Please see the features on Dr. Owens as well as new faculty members **Greg Peck** (Fruit Crops specialist at the Alson H. Smith, Jr. AREC in Winchester) and **Mark Williams** (Rhizosphere Biologist at the Blacksburg campus) in this year's SEEDS, which will be mailed to alumni very soon. If you are not getting SEEDS, please let me know so I can put you on the mailing list. SEEDS can also be found on our Web site under the "[Alumni and Friends](#)" button at the top of the main page. As always, we would enjoy hearing what our alumni and friends are up to. Please send news to rharris@vt.edu. Enjoy this latest edition of our monthly e-newsletter! With kind regards, *Roger*

PLANET Student Career Days team places 7th out of 60 teams!

After a 3 year hiatus from PLANET SCD, the Hort Hokies returned to their old form by placing among the top ten teams from across the country. Over 850 students participated in the four-day conference held near Chicago at Joliet Junior College. Virginia Tech was the top ACC school, with NSCU (11th), University of Maryland (14th) and Clemson (15th) also placing high in the competition. WVU finished 29th. Eight students won individual honors placing in the top four in their respective events. **Tish Poteet** placed 2nd in the Annual & Perennial ID event, **Samantha Hugo** placed 3rd in the 3D Exterior Landscape Design event, **JB Snelson** placed 3rd in Irrigation Troubleshooting, **Travis Jowers** placed 3rd in the Tractor Loader Backhoe Operations event, and **Jake Shreckhise** place 3rd in Woody Ornamental Plant ID. The team of **Billy Yuhase** and **Paul Hutcheson** placed 4th in the Arboriculture Techniques event and **Anne Howell** placed 4th (with a perfect score) in Maintenance Cost Estimating. Also notable were: The team of **Laura Shields** and **Paul Hutcheson** placed 8th in Personnel Management; The team of **Wesley Chiles** and **Zebulon Ethier** placed 9th in Truck & Trailer Operation; **Andrew Ransone** placed 10th in Compact Excavator Operation; **Tish Poteet** placed 10th in Interior Landscape Design; The team of **David Fetchko** and **Andrew Ransone** placed 11th in Paver Installation; **Daniel King** placed 11th in Maintenance Cost Estimating; **Anthony Piselli** placed 12th in Exterior Landscape Design.

Every student who attended contributed to our success. Even if a student doesn't place high in an event, his/her points are added to the team's total. While the team officially was sponsored by the Horticulture Department, there were students from the Ag Tech program, Ag Econ, Mechanical Engineering and Landscape Architecture.



Hort Hokies rule at PLANET!

VT Floriculture Research group attends National Floriculture Forum

The 2011 National Floriculture Forum (NFF) was hosted by Texas A&M University at the beautiful Dallas Arboretum. Horticulture faculty members **Joyce Latimer** and **Holly Scoggins** took a group of four graduate students to this year's Forum: **Mara Grossman**, **Kevin Harris**, **Shawn Appling**, and **J.B. Snelson**. The NFF is an educational meeting of faculty, graduate students, government scientists, and industry leaders in floriculture and includes tours to local growers. Mara and Kevin also presented their research at the forum.



The Floriculture team at the Dallas Arboretum: (left to right) Kevin Harris, JB Snelson, Joyce Latimer, Holly Scoggins, Mara Grossman, Shawn Appling

Hort graduate students **Mara Grossman, Shawn Appling, Kevin Harris** and **Katie England** organized and staffed a booth at Kids' Tech University recently where the kids could plant and take home their own basil plant. According to Katie, "We told them what to do in order to grow it as big as some of the large ones Shawn had left over from his study. I think the kids really enjoyed it and were eager to grow the plant large enough to use in food."



Katie England (background; picture 1), Shawn Appling (foreground; picture 1), Mara Grossman (picture 2) and Kevin Harris (picture 3) at Kid's University. The poster in the background of pictures 2 and 3 explain photosynthesis.

Future Happenings at the Hahn Horticulture Garden

Wednesday Garden Talks - Free! These fun and informative winter "Talks" are all presented indoors at the Peggy Lee Hahn Garden Pavilion.

- April 13, 12:00-1:00 p.m. "Spring Bulbs and Perennials" walk with Dr. Holly Scoggins
- May 11, 12:00-1:00 p.m. "Spring Flowering Trees and Shrubs" walk with Dr. Alex Niemiera

Gardening Workshops and Seminars Pre-registration is required for workshops and highly recommended for seminars. Call Stephanie at 540-231-5970 to register by phone or email vtgarden@vt.edu.

- April 23, 2011 9:00-11:00am Spring Wildflower Walk with Dr. Holly Scoggins. \$15 General public/\$10 Friends of the Garden members.
- May 7, 2011 10:00am - 12:00pm Rain Barrel Workshop (in conjunction with the Community Design Center). \$60 per barrel (Cash or check only; payable at the door the day of the workshop). Must pre-register. Registration form and more information is at [Rain Barrels](#)

Check out these and other programs at [Hahn Horticulture Garden](#)

Bingyu Zhao's project to introduce rust resistance in switchgrass was recently the focus of the daily University e-mail. Check it out at [No Rust](#).

Greg Welbaum reports that he has received a grant to study temperature responses of basil seed from a group in California.

Bingyu Zhao reports that **Zhiyong Yang** is a new Research Associate in his lab. Dr. Yang will work on a switchgrass molecular breeding project. Welcome Zhiyong!

Susan Day recently spent three days in Austin, Texas at the Sustainable Sites Initiative (SITES™) Technical Core Committee meeting. Approximately 30 experts from around the country gathered to make adjustments to the SITES rating system in response to submissions from the pilot phase of the program. The SITES initiative began as a partnership between the U.S. Botanic Garden, the American Society of Landscape Architects, and the Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center to create a voluntary certification system for creating sustainable landscapes—landscapes that capitalize on the ecosystem services provided by landscape soils, plants, and other systems. The U.S. Green Building Council has recently agreed to administer the program along with its Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program when open enrollment begins for SITES in 2012. This spring, SITES guidelines were adapted for government use and are currently under review by the White House for approval. Approval will allow government agencies and the General Services Administration to employ the guidelines for any land development or management projects and facilitate use by municipalities. Susan has been closely involved with the development of this voluntary certification initiative for sustainable landscapes, first as a member of the soils technical committee, and now as a member of the Technical Core Committee. She was instrumental in developing outcome standards for soil protection and restoration that are a part of the SITES program. For more information on SITES, visit [Sustainable Sites](#).



New Publications

Wiseman, P.E., J. Hoffman, **S.D. Day**, and T. Clements. 2011. A syllabus-level review of arboriculture education in the United States. *Arboriculture & Urban Forestry* 37(2): 51-59.

Save the date - Hort Club and Hahn Garden Plant Sale! April 28, 29, 30, 2011 - 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. each day. Garden/greenhouse complex on Washington St.

