

# Department of Horticulture

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## May 2011

Greetings students, Alumni, and Friends! A peaceful stillness has descended upon Blacksburg and spring flowers have given way to the colors of early summer. Classes have begun, but most everyone is in "summer mode". The June berries around campus are starting to ripen, but only the Hort folks appear to be enlightened (our secret!). A special time indeed! This is our last monthly e-newsletter until August and it is dedicated to our alumni, recent and not so recent. We will convene again after fall semester begins. In that newsletter I will tell you about our new students and report on the annual Garden Gala that is scheduled for this June 11<sup>th</sup>. As always, we would enjoy hearing what our alumni and friends are up to. Please send news to [rharris@vt.edu](mailto:rharris@vt.edu). Enjoy this latest edition of our monthly e-newsletter! With kind regards, *Roger*



**Paul Hutcheson** was recognized as our Outstanding Senior for 2011 at the recent CALS awards banquet. Paul, from Brightwood Virginia in Madison County, graduated with a 3.99 overall. (There apparently was one pesky A- his last semester!) Paul was president of the Horticulture Club this past year and was instrumental in the Saunders Hall landscaping upgrades. He also recently donated his time and talents to the Catawba Sustainability Center in their teaching efforts. Paul currently works with his family's horticulture farm market business.

**Richard Veilleux's** double monoploid potato lines have been instrumental in providing the Potato Genome Sequencing Consortium with plant material that significantly facilitated the sequencing effort. The development of these homozygous lines began by using anther culture early in his career. The Potato Genome Sequencing Consortium had originally selected a heterozygous Dutch clone for sequencing but realized after more than a year of effort, that genome assembly was not really possible with the available tools. The simplicity of the homozygous genome of the doubled monoploid *S. phureja* clone selected for the effort was assembled easily within a few months and now serves as the draft potato genome sequence, despite its lack of desirable commercial traits. The flagship paper for the potato genome has been published in *Nature*. According to Richard, "I am hardly one man working alone. In addition to those already mentioned, numerous graduate students and technicians at Virginia Tech have provided me with a talented workforce to be able to persist in this project. The Department of Horticulture at Virginia Tech has generously supported my program with assistant-ships, laboratory space, greenhouse space and field plots. I am happy to have provided DM 1-3 516 R44 to the potato community for generating a draft genome sequence, even if I still do not have the homogeneous, hybrid TPS progenies that I envisioned when I first set on this course."



Richard Veilleux, Professor (rear),  
Suzanne Piovano, Research  
Specialist (right), and Jeff Burr,  
Greenhouse manager (left)

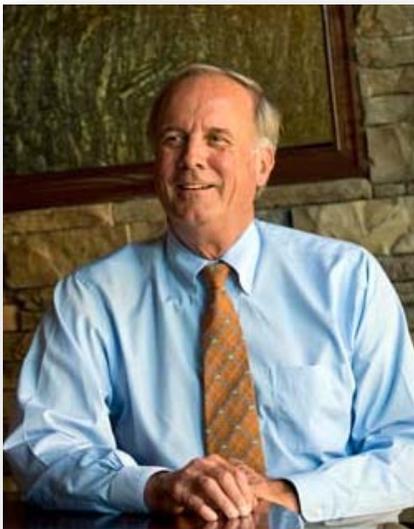
**Jerzy Nowak**, our former Department Head and current Director of the Center for Peace Studies and Violence Prevention is retiring this summer. Jerzy will rejoin us as an Emeritus faculty member and keep an office in Saunders Hall. He promises to stay active during this phase of his retirement by working with his two Ph.D. students and developing a class on sustainable horticulture.



**Peter Murray** was recognized as our Outstanding Alumnus for 2011. Peter graduated with his BS in Horticulture in 1982. After working for Hidden Lane Landscaping & Design for two years, he became president of that company. Hidden Lane Landscaping & Design is a premier landscaping firm in northern Virginia. This company has earned awards from the Virginia Society of Landscape Designers as well as other notable landscape industry organizations. Peter has been a very generous friend to our department.



He has financially supported the Hahn Horticulture Garden and has spent numerous hours of service on the Department of Horticulture's Advisory Council. His work on the Council has greatly aided in the direction and focus of the Department's curriculum and recruiting activities. Peter also promotes the department at Career Days at local schools. He is also very active in the industry. He has served as president of the Northern Virginia Nursery & Landscape Association, on the board of the Virginia Society of Landscape Designers, and on the board of the Landscape Contractors Association. Peter has also hosted VT student groups who visited his office and gardens. Peter's accomplishments have not gone unnoticed. His business was featured in the Washington Post's Business Section, as well as two other national trade association publications.



Virginia State Senator **John Watkins** is a recipient of one of the two university Alumni Distinguished Service awards. John, from Midlothian, has served in the Virginia State Senate since 1998, and he previously served 16 years in the Virginia House of Delegates. He also chairs the board of Watkins Nurseries Inc., a family business founded by his great-grandfather in 1876. John has served two six-year terms on the Virginia Tech Alumni Association Board of Directors and is a founding member and past-president of the CALS Alumni Organization. He earned his bachelor's in horticulture in 1969 and is one of five generations of his family to have graduated from Virginia Tech. His great-grandfather served on the university's board of visitors from 1903 to 1908 and again from 1912 to 1928, including time as rector.



**Mark Maslow** was recognized as our outstanding recent alumnus for 2011. Mark graduated with his BS in Horticulture in 2004 and no grass has grown under his feet since his graduation. While in high school, he started his own landscape business, Southern Landscape Group, and he is currently president and owner of this company. His company is a highly respected and successful business in the Lynchburg area yet his company operates throughout Virginia. Southern Landscape Group has completed several landscape projects at Virginia Tech including the installation of the April 16 Memorial Landscape Project. Mark's business

has received significant recognition by industry groups. His business was ranked in the "Top 100 Minority Business Enterprises" in 2010. His company also earned Lynchburg's "Small Business of the Year" award in 2010. Mark is the current president of the VNLA. He also financially supports the Department of Horticulture, the Hahn Horticulture Garden, and Virginia Tech (he's a Silver Hokie). Mark has recently joined the Department's Advisory Council and has spearheaded committees that have significantly contributed to the Department's betterment. He has not hesitated to jump into his vehicle to visit VT and help out the Department. He is a true friend and most enthusiastic supporter of our department.

**Upcoming Wednesday Garden Talk** - June 15, 12:00-1:00 p.m. "Weed ID and Sprayer Calibration" with Angela Post, manager, Weed ID Lab, Virginia Tech (bring weeds from home that need ID) Free! Learn at lunchtime! Meet at the Peggy Lee Hahn Garden Pavilion. No registration required. Parking passes available at Pavilion for Visitors only. F/S must park in designated F/S spaces.



Saturday, June 11, 2011,  
5:30 pm to 9:00 pm at the  
Hahn Horticulture Garden