

Department of Horticulture

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August 2011

Greetings students, Alumni, and Friends! The peaceful stillness reported on our last e-newsletter in May has evaporated! Classes are well under way and an occasional cool night gives us a hint of fall. There is even a bit of fall color on the red maples around campus. Of course any graduate of our Landscape Establishment class should quickly remind us that we really need to thank compacted soil and drought for the early color! We recently held our first ever informational meeting with all of our undergraduates, where everyone was introduced and we discussed overall department culture (see pictures below). We were happy to have Susan Sumner, Dean of Academic Programs for our college with us. Everyone was given a free Hort Department T-shirt, and Cody Erickson was the lucky winner of an I-Pad that was donated by Steve and Juanita Grigg of Grigg Design in Manassas. After the meeting we all adjourned to the Ag Quad for an ice cream social sponsored by the Horticulture Club. It was a great way to kick off the semester!

As always, we 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*

We sadly had to admit that even our best friends and treasured employees deserve to retire as we said goodbye to **Donna Long** this month. Donna worked in our department for over 25 years and has ushered countless students through the academic minefields on their journey through VT. For the last 3 years, Donna served as our executive administrative assistant as well as 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.





Scenes from our fall meeting



7th Annual Garden Gala
LUCKY SEVEN



Scenes from the Garden Gala this past June. The most successful ever!



Graduate student **Cain Hickey** was recently awarded a \$4,000 scholarship by the American Society for Enology and Viticulture (ASEV) and a \$1,000 scholarship from the ASEV's Eastern Section. Cain is working with advisor **Tony Wolf** at our Winchester AREC to evaluate the interaction of water stress and vine capacity on fruit composition and wine quality of Cabernet Sauvignon. He presented a research paper at the Eastern Section meeting of the ASEV in Baltimore in July, and is co-author of a recently published paper on related work in the American Journal of Enology and Viticulture.

Eric Beers is the lead investigator on a \$1,500,000 Department of Energy grant titled "Functional Interactomics: Determining the Rolls Played by Members of the Poplar Biomass Protein - Protein Interactome".

Bingyu Zhao is a member of the multi-university team that recently also received a Department of Energy grant. The project, funded for \$1,300,000, is titled "An Integrated Approach to Improving Plant Biomass Production".

Our *Hardscape Materials and Installation* course is well under way. This fall's class is a partnership with the Community Housing Partners Organization (CHP). The class will be conducted at the CHP location in Christiansburg. Students will be installing/building an arbor, pavers for a patio, a dry stream bed, and a seat wall. Students will rotate through each of these projects. The Course is coordinated by **Alex Niemiera** and taught by Nathan Zigler (Haven Landscape Design/Build, Inc.), John Bluey (CHP), Caleb Simon (CHP). The project was made possible by Mark Jackson, CHP Vice President of New River Center for Energy and Research Training.

Our floriculture team was very busy this summer! **Joyce Latimer** attended the North American Horticultural Supply Association meetings in St. Louis in June to study the garden container recycling program at the Missouri Botanical Garden and to network with plastic manufacturers and distributors on this issue. Joyce and **Holly Scoggins**, along with MS students, **Mara Grossman** and **Kevin Harris**, spoke at a short Course in Columbus, Ohio, in July. The rest of the floriculture group, research technician **John Freeborn**, and MS students **Shawn Appling** and **J.B. Snelsen**, also attended. Later, Joyce and Shawn spoke at the Plant Growth Regulation Society of America annual meetings in Chicago. Still not done for the summer, Joyce and Holly spoke at the Perennial Plant Association Meetings in Atlanta. Whew!

The poster titled "Management of the Seed-Transmitted Bacterial Fruit Bloch Disease of Cucurbits using the Maize Non-Host Disease Resistance Gene RXO1" by **Sy Traore**, **Bingyu Zhao**, Lily Mahon, and **Greg Welbaum** received third place in the poster competition at the 10th International Seed Science Society Meeting on Seed Biology, in Salvador, Brazil.

Sarah Holt recently won first prize in the student oral presentation contest at the meeting of The Society of *InVitro* Biology-Plant Biology in Raleigh. Sarah finishes her PhD this September and is off for a *post doc* position at the University of North Texas. Congratulations Sarah!