

# Department of Horticulture

Saunders Hall, Blacksburg, VA 24061  
[www.hort.vt.edu](http://www.hort.vt.edu) (540)231-5451



Roger Harris, Department Head [www.hort.vt.edu/](http://www.hort.vt.edu/)

## September 2011

The beginning of October finds us with those cool Blacksburg mornings and the first hints of fall color. The first exams are over and everyone is settling into the fall semester. Our Fall Career Focus was held the last week of September, and students were busy meeting prospective employees and arranging for summer internships. Despite the still-struggling economy, our students are finding good jobs. This is a testament to the excellent reputation that previous students have built with our horticulture industry. As always, we would love to hear updates on our alumni and other friends. Alumni - stay connected with VT on [YouTube](#) and visit the [Horticulture](#) Department web site often for special departmental features. Enjoy! With kind regards, *Roger*

We are pleased to welcome **Ashley Wills** as our new Administrative Assistant. Ashley is filling the void left by **Maura Wood** when she became our Executive and Undergraduate Administrative Assistant due to **Donna Long's** retirement. Welcome Ashley! Congratulations Maura!

The Hahn Horticulture Garden's 2nd symposium, held August 27, welcomed over 100 attendees. "The Wicked Garden" was headlined by New York Times bestselling author Amy Stewart who presented "Wicked Plants" and "Wicked Bugs." Paula Gross, co-author of "Bizarre Botanicals" and gardener/artist Karen Rexrode rounded out a day of fascinating facts and fun on the darker side of gardening.



Amy Stewart speaks at the HHG symposium "The Wicked Garden" - that's her own garden in the background.



Pi Alpha Xi, the honor society for Horticulture, is now accepting orders for their popular 'Hokie® Blend' tulip bulbs (a mix of orange and plum). Pre-orders will be available for pick up or just shop the sale on Homecoming weekend (Friday Oct. 21 and Saturday Oct. 22 before the football game). The bulb sale will be stationed at the front of the Hahn Horticulture Garden on Washington St. For more information, email [bulbsale@vt.edu](mailto:bulbsale@vt.edu) or visit the PAX website at [www.hort.vt.edu/PAX](http://www.hort.vt.edu/PAX). Proceeds support student scholarships and service projects!

The Horticulture Department was well represented at the recent annual meeting of the American Society for Horticulture Science on the "Big Island" of Hawaii. The Hokie Horticulturists organized and led tours of gardens and nurseries, organized and moderated workshops and research sessions, and presented research in oral and poster sessions. Representing us and participating in the conference were **Richard Veilleux, Alex Niemiera, Holly Scoggins, Jim Owen, Greg Peck, John Freeborn, Mara Grossman, JB Snelson, and Roger Harris.**



Aloha!

**Greg Welbaum** and collaborators Dave Kuhn and Monica Ponder of the Food Science Department are testing the safety of vegetables grown from tilapia waste water. The main objective of the project is to develop a sustainable production system for growing leafy greens that are free of bacteria that cause human disease like *E. coli*, *Listeria*, or *Salmonella*.





**Hokies take Manhattan!** Horticulture students recently spent four days exploring everything horticultural in DC, Philly and New York City. Yes, it was another extraordinary fall field trip, organized and led by **Robert McDuffie**. Visits included Hidden Lane Landscaping with Peter Murray ('82 Hort alum) and recent horticulture grads Tony Orband ('09) and Anthony Piselli ('11), Merrifield Garden Center with Tim Guy ('83), and Homestead Garden Center; and that was only day 1! The next two days were spent in NYC, beginning on Saturday at Brooklyn Botanical Gardens followed by free time in Manhattan and that night the Broadway musical, Spiderman. Wave Hill Garden, the New York Botanical Garden, and Central Park were visited the following day. The last day included the gardens at Chanticleer (just outside of Philly) with Doug Croft ('96) and ended with a full afternoon at Longwood Gardens in Kennett Square, PA, including a behind the scenes tour with intern LaDell Sumpter ('11).



Left photo: Robert McDuffie (seated, center) and happy horticulture students.

Right photo: LaDell Sumpter (right) shows students a nursery area at Longwood Gardens

**Joyce Latimer** and **John Freeborn** participated in the Hampton Roads AREC Field Day. Joyce spoke on greenhouse management principles for hobby greenhouses and John spoke on developing best management practices for commercial greenhouses.

**Shawn Appling** (MS student) recently received a travel grant and spoke at the Plant Growth Regulation Society of America annual meeting in Chicago.

**Joyce Latimer** participated in the Wytheville Boosting Recycling in Virginia Workshop sponsored by the Southeast Recycling Development Council (SERDC). The update included details on how plastic recycling in many Virginia localities is now including garden and nursery containers.

**Lisa Lipsey, Alex Niemiera, and Velva Groover** recently conducted a breeding workshop at Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens in Richmond. The workshop is part of the Beautiful Gardens plant introduction program and trains folks on how to become hobby breeders of ornamental plants.



Lisa Lipsey (left photo) and Alex Niemiera (right photo) instruct workshop participants.

**Susan Day** and her colleague Dr. Eric Wiseman in Forest Resources & Environmental Conservation have worked with supporting organizations, including Trees Virginia, The Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association, the Mid-Atlantic Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture, the Green Industry Council, and others to propose a specialty license plate for Virginia to raise awareness of the value of community trees and fund community tree outreach and education. Virginia Tech students designed the plate and **Sarah Gugercin** has created a website to pre-sell the plates. The program needs to pre-sell 450 plates for the Department of Motor Vehicles to put the plate into production. Visit [www.valovestrees.org](http://www.valovestrees.org) for more information.



**Mark Williams'** lab has 2 new arrivals: Post doc **Madhavi Kakumanu** has arrived to begin experimentation at Virginia Tech. **Rosana Pineda** has joined the lab a student worker. She is taking classes at the VT Language Culture Institute, in pursuit of passing her TOEFL exam. She hopes to begin a PhD program with him in January. Welcome Madhavi and Rosana!