

Department of Horticulture

Saunders Hall, Blacksburg, VA 24061
www.hort.vt.edu (540)231-5451



Roger Harris, Department Head www.hort.vt.edu

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Happy New Year everyone! I hope that you have had a peaceful holiday season. Blacksburg is truly a magical place this time of year. Our fall semester ended with a nice holiday pot luck gathering at the Hahn Pavilion where we welcomed our new graduates and their families (see list below). Locals have all enjoyed the lack of traffic, but we of course miss our students and look forward to the hustle-bustle of the new semester. Alumni, we would love to hear from you. Please e-mail me with an update that you would like to share in our annual newsletter, "Seeds". One way to stay connected with VT is through the university [You Tube](#) channel. Please visit the [Horticulture](#) Department web site often for special departmental features. Enjoy!
With kind regards, *Roger*

Congratulations to our new BS Horticulture alumni!

Charles Ripley Aller
Thomas Alexander Brown
Heather Lynn Croushorn

Kathleen Michelle Grudman
Christopher Ross Johnston
Kerry Atchison Meier

Andrew Tribble Ransone
Laura Ellen Sheilds
Trent Roller Shreckhise

Alan McDaniel recently received the National Future Farmers of America (FFA) VIP award. "The VIP citation recognizes the dedicated individuals who contribute to the FFA mission of student success through their hard work and cooperation," said National FFA Organization CEO Dwight Armstrong. "Without such strong and outstanding commitment, FFA would not be able to help build strong character in its members, who in turn build strong families, communities, and industries." Congratulations Alan!



Jerzy Nowak, our former Department Head and recently retired Director of the Center for Peace Studies and Violence Prevention is now Director of International Affairs for CALS. We are pleased to have him back in Saunders Hall!



Zac Barnes received a Kroger gift certificate for winning the "grow a container garden of medicinal plants" competition in **Greg Welbaum's** Medicinal Plants and Herbs class this past semester. All students are required to design and grow the container gardens and classmates critique each garden and vote on the best container garden in the class. Congratulations Zac!



The Mid-Atlantic Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture recently presented *A Day of Arboriculture at Virginia Tech* to Landscape Establishment and Maintenance students. The event was originally conceived by Hokie Hort alumnus and professional tree care consultant Ed Millhous (left picture above), and he has led the annual event for the last 18 years! Also participating were Jim Martin and Justin Courtney with Growing Earth Professional Tree Care in Ashburn, Peter Deahl (right picture above) with Fine Pruning in Sterling, Travis Morgan with the F.A. Bartlett Tree Expert Co. in Roanoke, and Kevin Sigmon with American Electric Power in Glade Spring.

Green Landscaping is official! President Obama recently signed executive order 13514 "Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy, and Economic Performance" that adopts guidelines developed from the Sustainable Sites Initiative (SITES™): [Guidance for Federal Agencies on Sustainable Practices for Designed Landscapes](#) (click on "more information" to see the document). **Susan Day** made significant contributions to these guidelines in the area of soil protection and rehabilitation by serving on the Soils Technical Committee, the Core Technical Committee, and as a Credit Steward for SITES during the past 5 years. **Sarah Gugercin** also worked on the project and made significant contributions.



Twenty-six students participated in building a retention wall (shown in photo) and an arbor, and installed pavers for a patio area in **Alex Niemiera's** fall Hardscape Materials and Installation class. The work was done at The New River Center for Energy, Research, and Training (NRCERT) in Christiansburg. Nathan Zigler of Haven Landscape Design/Build and John Bluey and Caleb Simon of NRCERT taught the students the skills involved in each of the projects.

Recent publications:

Xu, B., L. Escamilla-Traviño, N. Sathitsuksanoh, **Z. Shen**, Hui Shen, Y-H Zhang, R. Dixon, and **B. Zhao**. 2011. Silencing of 4-coumarate:coenzyme A ligase in switchgrass leads to reduced lignin content and improved fermentable sugar yields for biofuel production. *New Phytologist* 192:611-625.

Himaya, M. and **M. Williams**. 2011. Soil habit and horizon properties impact bacterial diversity and composition. *Soil Biology and Biochemistry* 75 (4) 1440-1448.

Day, S. D. and R. Amateis. 2011 Predicting canopy and trunk cross-sectional area of silver linden (*Tilia tomentosa*) in confined planting cutouts. *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening* 10(4): 317-322.

Bassuk, N.L. and **S.D. Day**. Site Design: Soils. 2011. In *The Sustainable Sites Handbook: A Complete Guide to the Principles, Strategies, and Best Practices for Sustainable Landscapes*. M. Calkins (Ed.). Wiley & Sons, Hoboken, New Jersey. 560 pp.

Zhang, J.X., X.M. Sun, Z.P. Zhang, Y.W. Ni, Q. Zhang, X.M. Liang, H.B. Xiao, J.P. Chenand, and **J.G. Tokuhisa**. 2011. Metabolite profiling of *Arabidopsis* seedlings in response to exogenous sinalbin and sulfur deficiency. *Phytochemistry* 72: 1767-1778.

Vaughan, M.M., D. Tholl, and **J.G. Tokuhisa**. 2011. An aeroponic culture system for the study of root herbivory on *Arabidopsis thaliana*. *Plant Methods* 7, Art. no. 5: 1-10.