

Department of Horticulture

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Greetings everyone! This is "anticipation" week on campus as students are taking a flurry of exams while anxiously awaiting the week-long Spring Break. Spring Break is a lot different than it was years ago. Daytona Beach is so 1970! Students now do a variety of things that range from Caribbean Cruises to participating in educational / outreach trips in Africa. Meanwhile, exciting things are happening around the department. See below for details. 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*

Susan Clark joins Horticulture faculty

We are very excited to welcome Dr. Susan Clark to our faculty. Dr. Clark was formerly Associate Professor in the Human Nutrition, Foods, and Exercise department, where she was the founding director of the cross-college Civic Agriculture program. This innovative program allows students to minor in Civic Agriculture while majoring in something else (especially Horticulture!). See what Dr. Clark says about the new minor in the highlight below. Dr. Clark will continue to direct the minor and to teach several key classes developed as essential components of the minor. As an Associate Professor of Horticulture, she will also help build the sustainable foods component of our Environmental Horticulture major and advise undergraduate and graduate students. We are delighted to have Dr. Clark join us. We know her to be very passionate about our teaching mission and great things are on the horizon!



The Civic Agriculture Minor (taken from *Innovations*, a VT periodical).

"The collaboration between faculty, Virginia Tech Dining Services, Heifer International, and the YMCA makes this project unique," says **Susan Clark**, associate professor of human nutrition, foods and exercise, and program director for the project. "Together, these entities are committed to helping students learn about sustainable agricultural solutions to combat poverty and hunger while caring for the environment" The minor will examine hunger and environmental nutrition issues, food access, food security, food production, and agriculture, and their relationships to a community's economic viability. Students will practice organic gardening, deliver and serve their produce to the university's dining services, work with Virginians in local gardens, participate with a nonprofit humanitarian organization, and earn course credits. They will also have the opportunity to participate in an alternative spring break at the Heifer Ranch in Arkansas and a future study tour in Honduras.

"Our vision is to produce a minor that reflects best practices for sustaining our community foodsheds and that produces graduates with expertise to enter the job market," explains Clark.

Clark believes that if students can acquire knowledge and skills to effectively restore community foodsheds, their futures will also become sustained. "Students will transfer what is being learned in the classroom to develop solutions for real-life problems. Our world's future belongs to students who are innovative thinkers and agents of change," says Clark.

New faculty position in Sustainable Hort Food Production: The search for a candidate to fill our new faculty position in Sustainable Hort Food Production is underway. **Holly Scoggins** is leading our 7-member team in a search to fill this position with the most talented person possible. The successful candidate will work closely with **Susan Clark** and others to bolster the emerging program within our Environmental Horticulture major. The position will be a 50% teaching and 50% research appointment and we hope to have the new person in place this August.

Recent publications

Harris, J. Roger and Lisa E. Richardson-Calfee. 2012. Can growth of seed-propagated oaks be predicted before lining out in nursery rows? *Journal of Environmental Horticulture* 30(1):23-27.

Kakumanu, Madhavi L. and Mark A. Williams. 2012. Soil diffusion system enriches the growth of diverse and previously uncultivated bacterial taxa. *Soil Science Society of America Journal*. 76:463-474.

Sy Traore and Tiffany Thomas have a new baby boy, Tyler Hamad Traore. Tyler was born this past October in Montgomery, Alabama. Congratulations Sy and Tiffany!

Virginia Vineyards Assoc. names Jeanette Smith 2011 Grower of the Year

Virginia Secretary of Agriculture Todd Haymore presented Jeanette Smith with the 2012 Grower of the Year award at the Vineyard Vineyards Association's Annual Technical Meeting and Trade Show at the Omni in Charlottesville. "This year's nominee exceeds the Grower of the Year requirements, and then some. She is an invaluable resource to growers throughout Virginia and up and down the East Coast, and I am honored to present her with this award," said Sec. Haymore. *Smith began working in*



Virginia vineyards in 1981 while studying horticulture at Virginia Tech. She received her bachelor's degree in 1983. She since has been involved in planting, management and maintenance of vineyards in New York and North Carolina, but she has primarily worked in Virginia. Her viticulture experience has run the gamut from vineyard laborer, manager, agricultural extension agent, consultant and sales agent for a major east coast agricultural chemical company. She has been education and research committee chair for the Virginia Vineyards Association as well as a member of the Virginia Wine Advisory Board. See the complete story at [wine grapes](#).

John Freeborn and **Joyce Latimer** were the speakers at the Shenandoah Valley Greenhouse Production Management Workshop in Dayton in early January. John had great press coverage for the hands-on portion of the program: [John Freeborn](#)

Joyce Latimer gave an invited talk on Using PGRs on Perennials at the Tennessee Hort Expo (T.H.E.) in Nashville in late January. Major participants in T.H.E. are the vineyards and winemakers. Joyce reports that Tennessee also has some nice wines!

Mara Grossman, **Holly Scoggins** and **Joyce Latimer** presented updates on their research at the VFGA Herbaceous Perennials Production Program at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden on February 16th. Over 35 growers participated in the day-long program. **John Freeborn** and **JB Snelson** also attended the program.

Shawn Appling and **Mara Grossman** attended the Southern Region ASHS meeting in Birmingham AL in early February. Both competed, along with 15 other participants, in the Norman F. Childers M.S. Graduate Student Paper Competition.

Mark Williams is teaching a new graduate class this semester called *The Ecology of Plant-Microbe Interaction*.

Josh Freeman is part of a team that has received a two year, \$ 2.6 million, USDA-specialty crops grant with 7 cooperating institutions (Ohio State, NC State, Clemson, UF, Univ. of Arizona, VT, USDA-ARS). This work will investigate the potential of using grafting on fruiting vegetables as well as on ways to best integrate these technologies into the industry. The team will research grafting methods (including robotics) that improve overall production efficiency as well as make potential improvements in pest management and crop productivity.

First projects certified by SITES national rating system for sustainable landscapes



From the VT daily e-mail: The Sustainable Sites Initiative (SITES™) has developed the nation's most comprehensive system for rating the sustainable design, construction, and maintenance of built landscapes and has selected three pilot projects to be certified under the new system, which was created by dozens of the country's leading sustainability experts, scientists, and design professionals. **Susan Day** (left in photo) helped develop the criteria for soil restoration, one of many criteria used in the SITES™ rating system. **Sarah Gugercin** (right in photo) served as a Sites intern and helped in many ways.

The certified pilot projects include the corporate headquarters of Novus International Inc. in St. Charles, Mo.; the Green at College Park, a green space at the University of Texas at Arlington; and the Woodland Discovery Playground at Shelby Farms Park in Memphis, Tenn.

"The educational value of these pilot projects is significant. They demonstrate what a sustainable site looks and feels like, and now serve as a model to others aspiring for sustainability in a designed landscape," said Holly H. Shimizu, executive director of the United States Botanic Garden. "Having the first pilot projects certified solidifies years of work into something tangible that we hope will be replicated all around the country."

A partnership of the American Society of Landscape Architects, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center at the University of Texas at Austin, and the United States Botanic Garden, SITES was created to fill a critical need for guidelines and recognition of green landscapes based on their planning, design, construction, and maintenance.