

Department of Horticulture

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Roger Harris, Department Head

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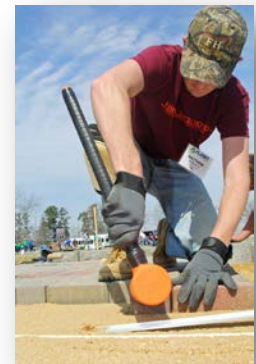
Greetings everyone! Alas, the spring advance has slowed around Blacksburg. After the past month of cold temperatures and ice and snow, garden fever is infecting more than a few! In this month's e-newsletter, we report as promised on the student trip to PLANET at Auburn University and we feature our alumni of the year. Alumni, we would love to hear what you are up to. Please e-mail me (rharris@vt.edu) 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. Be a life-time Hokie by staying in touch with the [CALS alumni association](#). Check out the current issue of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences "[Innovations](#)" newsletter. Please visit the [Horticulture](#) Department web site often for special departmental features. Enjoy! With kind regards, *Roger*

Students in the Horticulture Club care about our community! They planted a seed for the next generation of leaders in the green industry by rebuilding a greenhouse at Harding Avenue Elementary School in Blacksburg last semester.



Hort Hokies go to Auburn for PLANET - Twenty eight Virginia Tech Horticulture and Agricultural Technology students traveled to Auburn, Alabama for the 37th annual Student Career Days competition. Sponsored by PLANET (Professional Landcare Network), Student Career Days provides students the opportunity to network with green industry leaders as well as compete against other top horticulture students from across the country. Over 60 colleges and universities were represented in 27 indoor and outdoor events. This year the team from Virginia Tech placed 16th overall. A few students achieved personal bests by placing top five in four events. **Wesley Chiles** and **Josh Wilson** placed 5th in Landscape Maintenance Operations, **Matthew Cox** placed 4th in Construction Cost Estimating, **Jake Shreckhise** placed 4th in Woody Ornamental Plant Identification, and **Jacob Chance** and **Matthew Cox** placed 3rd in Hardscape Installation. Five of our students interviewed and were offered jobs on the spot. We are proud of how hard all of these students worked in the competition and in achieving career goals. We look forward to travelling to Colorado State University in 2014!

Hort Hokies at PLANET, Auburn University



Each year our department recognizes two special alumni at the college alumni awards ceremony, one a recent graduate (10 years ago or less) and one in an overall category as our Alumna/Alumnus of the year. This year we honored Jake Browder as our recent Alumnus of the Year and Dr. Rich Marini as our Alumnus of the Year.

Jake Browder—Recent Alumnus of the Year - Jake earned his B.S. and M.S. degrees in Horticulture in 2003, and 2004, respectively. After receiving his M.S. degree, he served as a research assistant in the Horticulture Department for two years. His M.S. degree and his research assistant work resulted in co-authorship on five refereed publications. His M.S. mentor and research assistant supervisor, Dr. Robert Wright, was most impressed with Jake's work ethic, productivity, and good nature. After leaving Virginia Tech, Jake served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in the Dominican Republic for more than two years. He served as an agro-forestry extensionist educating farmers how to grow fruit trees, and how to practice soil conservation and reforestation. For the last two years Jake has served as a Soil Conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA). He has numerous duties but his main focus is to assist land owners in the development, application, and maintenance of conservations plans. Jake also practices what he preaches. He owns and operates a vegetable and ornamental plant farm that serves the local farmer's market, restaurants, and other outlets. His operation employs sustainable and soil conservation practices. Jake is in the middle in the photo below and is flanked by Dr. Roger Harris on the left and Dr. Alan Grant (Dean of CALS) on the right.



Dr. Rich Marini - Alumnus of the Year - Rich earned his BS degree at the University of Massachusetts in the Plant & Soil Sciences department in 1974 and his MS degree at the University of Vermont in the Plant & Soil Sciences department in 1978. He graduated from our department with his PhD in pomology in 1981. His major advisor was **Dr. John Barden**. Rich served as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Horticulture at Rutgers University from 1981-1985 and took a job as Associate Professor with our department in 1985. He served as Associate Professor and then Professor until 2004, when he left to become Professor and Head of the Department of Horticulture at Penn State University. That department was recently restructured and is now the Department of Plant Science, of which Rich is still Department Head. Rich has received numerous awards, distinctions, and honors over his career, including Fellow of the American Society for Horticultural Science, 2005, The Peach Award, presented by the National Peach Council, 2005, Chair of the American Society for Horticultural Science Publications Committee, 2004 & 2005, and Member of the Board of Directors for the American Society for Horticultural Science, 2004 & 2005. He has authored 96 refereed journal publications and over 100 professional abstracts, papers, and reports. Rich has mentored more than 30 graduate students, many of which have become research scientists. He is one of the most accomplished researchers in the area of tree fruit physiology in the U.S. Rich is in the middle in the photo below and is flanked by Dr. Roger Harris on the left and Dr. Alan Grant (Dean of CALS) on the right.



Greg Welbaum has moved! Greg Welbaum recently moved his research laboratory over to the Corporate Research Center, adjacent to the Virginia Tech campus. The lab address is 1005, RB 1880 Platt Drive. Greg will keep his office in Saunders Hall. Osamah Kahn, a sophomore in the Biological Sciences department, won a Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship to work in the new lab this summer.



Linda Pinkham and Lisa Lipsey published a great article in March's *Virginia Gardener* magazine called: *PLANT THIS! NOT THAT! - Tried and true plants for Virginia gardens*. This article features the 2013 Beautiful Gardens® Plants of Distinction.

Recent Publication:

Taylor Frazier, Zhengxing Shen, Elizabeth Bush, and Bingyu Zhao, 2013. First report of *Puccinia emaculata* infection on switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum* L.) in Virginia. *Plant Disease*, 97(3):424.

Richard Veilleux travelled to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in Seattle March 13-16 to present his work on micronutrient acquisition and transport in potato at a conference for first time grantees to the Gates Grand Challenge program.

Mara Grossman and Joyce Latimer attended the National Floriculture Forum in Portsmouth, NH, where Mara received a \$500 travel grant to present a summary of the CALS Graduate Teaching Scholars Program.

Congratulations to **Rui "Harry" Xia** who successfully defended his PhD dissertation on March 19. Harry entered the PhD program in our department as **Rongcai Yuan's** student. After Rongcai's untimely death Harry was advised jointly by **Eric Beers** and **Zongrang Liu**.

Mark your calendar for the Hort Club Spring Plant Sale, April 25th through 27th, 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. each day. The sale features annuals, tropicals, perennials, veggie transplants, shrubs, and trees. Proceeds benefit student scholarships and programs. There's also barbecue from the AgEcon/NAMA club! For more information, visit www.hort.vt.edu/hortclub

Hahn Horticulture Garden

Art in the Garden

A new program featuring the work of local artists on display inside the Peggy Lee Hahn Garden Pavilion. Currently: "Altered Paper" by Martha A. Olson.

Lunchtime Learning - Free Garden Walks and Talks

Held on various Wednesdays (not every Wed.). All start promptly at 12:00 noon and run from 30 minutes to one hour. 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.

April 10, 12:00-1:00 p.m. "Useful Monsters: How Abnormal Flowers Helped Geneticists test Goethe's 200-Year-Old Theory That Flowers Evolved From Leaves" with Dr. Eric Beers, Professor, VT Horticulture. In the 18th century, double and unusual flowers were coveted by collectors while others viewed them with suspicion. Come find out how today's geneticists solved the riddle of how such monsters are produced and see if Goethe's theory is correct!

April 24, 12:00-1:00 p.m. "Plant Sale Preview!" with Lisa Lipsey and Holly Scoggins. Join us for a sneak peek at some of the terrific trees, shrubs, perennials and more that will be available for sale at the Hort Club Spring Plant Sale April 25-27. Note that no plants can be sold or held on Wednesday - you'll have to come to the sale!

Spring Gardening Workshops and Seminars

Take advantage of our low admission prices and prepare to be informed, entertained, and inspired! Become a Friend of the Garden and enjoy our member discounts! (visit "Memberships" for membership form and more details). Pre-registration is required for workshops and highly recommended for seminars. Call Stephanie at 540-231-5970 to register by phone or email vtgarden@vt.edu

Sex in the Garden: Hidden Secrets! with Brian Jackson

Saturday, April 13, 2013 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Location TBD. \$15 Friends of the Garden/\$20 general public. Brian will take us on a tour of some of the mysteries and oddities found in the sex lives of some of our favorite plants. From attracting mates to "showing off their goods," plants are experts at flaunting their stuff to assure perpetuation of their species. Brian is an Assistant Professor at North Carolina State University, where he teaches plant identification and introduction to horticulture, does research, and ogle the flowers.

Fruit Tree Grafting Workshop with Barry Robinson - Smithfield/Hahn Partnership!

Saturday, May 4, 2013 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Hahn Garden Pavilion. \$15 per registrant, pre-registration required. **REGISTER THROUGH SMITHFIELD - call 540-231-3947**

Join Historic Smithfield Plantation and the Hahn Horticultural Garden for grafting class. Horticulturist Barry Robinson will lead the hands-on workshop through the science of fruit tree grafting. Heritage scionwood from the orchards at Smithfield Plantation will be used. Students will be able to take home (4) grafted rootstocks. Minimum class size required to make. Call 540-231-3947 to register!

The New Native Cottage Garden: Update the Classic Cottage Garden with Bold, Contemporary Designs! with Thomas Rainer

Thursday, May 9, 2013 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Location TBD. \$10 Friends of the Garden/\$15 general public. Call Stephanie at 540-231-5970 to register by phone or email vtgarden@vt.edu

It's time to take a fresh look at the cottage garden. This traditionally British form can be easily adapted for American gardens using American plants. The charming jumble of perennials and shrubs can be a truly sustainable and beautiful model for small gardens. American gardeners can have all the advantages of a cottage garden--the romantic appeal, the low maintenance, and the colorful charm of it all--with a wildlife friendly native mix. Thomas will share tips for designing a contemporary cottage garden, including his picks of native plants best suited for cottage gardens.

Thomas Rainer is a landscape architect by profession and a gardener by obsession. Thomas has worked on projects such as the U.S. Capitol grounds, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial, and The New York Botanical Garden, but is happiest puttering in his small garden in Washington, D.C. You can find more about Thomas at his award-winning blog, "Grounded Design." Thomas thinks you should use more natives, plant in humongous masses, and loosen up that landscape, for crying out loud.

Have you noticed this "Cowgoyle"? Do you know where he lurks?

