

Department of Horticulture

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Roger Harris, Department Head

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Greetings everyone! The early summer stillness around Blacksburg still rules, even as summer school begins. Most horticulture students are out getting work experience so we have no classroom Horticulture classes during the summer. However, we do offer an on-line greenhouse production class (taught by Holly Scoggins). The Hahn Horticulture Garden staff is currently busy gearing up for our annual Garden Gala (see below). This is truly a great celebration that shouldn't be missed! As I mentioned in the last e-newsletter, Aureliano Bombarely begins on the Blacksburg campus as Assistant Professor in August. We have an excellent Assistant Professor of Horticulture Crops scheduled to begin in the Painter campus in August. The "t's are not all crossed" at this moment so a formal announcement will unfortunately have to wait until our next e-newsletter, scheduled for the end of August. I will be taking a 6-month study leave starting in June. The department will be in good hands in my absence with Richard Veilleux serving as Interim Head. Our communications specialist, Sarah Gugercin, will assist him with the e-newsletters while I am away.

- With kind regards, *Roger*

Alumni, please e-mail me (rharris@vt.edu) with an update that you would like to share in our annual newsletter, *Seeds*. The current edition of *Seeds* is now posted on our website. Please visit the [Horticulture](#) Department web site often for former *Seeds* editions and special departmental features. It is very helpful for us to know where our alumni have landed and how their careers have progressed. Please help by going to <http://www.alumni.vt.edu/gateway/index.html> to enter your data for us. We would be most grateful! One good 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. We are now on Facebook! Please "like" us and check out news, links to scholarships, new course announcements and all sorts of other departmental information at <https://www.facebook.com/VirginiaTechHorticulture> -

VT Department of Horticulture on Social Media: For those of you who are social media savvy there are many social sites to follow within the department. For pictures and updates join any or all of the following sites. On **Facebook**... You can like and join: Hahn Horticulture Garden, Virginia Tech Department of Horticulture and Horticulture Club. On **Twitter** ... You can follow: @VTHahnGarden and @VTFloralDesign. On **Instagram** ... You can follow: @VTHahnGarden and @VTFloralDesign.

The 10th annual Garden Gala will be June 14th. Don't miss this fun-filled celebration of Horticulture. It promises to be a fantastic evening.



It's our 10th Gala - we're celebrating with the theme "It's All About The Garden!" Save the date for an unforgettable evening. The Gala starts at 5:30 p.m. and ends at 9:00 p.m. - rain or shine! Invitations to past attendees were mailed out end of April; ticket request forms are available OR buy tickets online through Virginia Tech's Continuing and Professional Education (CPE) division (see below for more info on that) at <http://www.cpe.vt.edu/reg/gardengala/>.

Help us out with our planning by purchasing tickets prior to June 1 for \$75 per person. Later ticket sales and walk-ups are welcome at \$90 per person

So what's going on at this year's Garden Gala?

~ Fabulous food and drinks by Blue Ridge Catering of Roanoke featuring our signature wine cocktail plus several more wines and craft beers to choose from. Enjoy passed hors d'oeuvres and many delightful small plates at two stations under the the auction tents. A bountiful Cheese & Charcuterie Board under the big tent plus petite sweets round out the menu.

~Live and silent auctions of rare plants, garden art, vacations, and more. Bring your checkbook!

~Live music by Farm Use Only, renowned old-time string band

Ashley Thompson, PhD student advised by **Greg Peck**, received a travel grant from the American Society for Horticultural Science to assist with travel to their annual conference in Orlando to present a poster titled "Does rootstock and fertilizer choice affect apple orchard productivity and soil community ecology?" Congratulations Ashley!

Congratulations to **Matt Cox**, one of the state's newest Virginia Certified Horticulturists! The Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association (VNLA) sponsors this program to increase the professionalism of the nursery and landscape industry. This past year, the VNLA extended free membership to all of our students. They also extended the offer to take the certification exam by waiving the employment requirement. Thanks VNLA for this great opportunity.

Recent Publications:

Mei C., Lara Chavez A., **Lowman S.** and **B. Flinn.** 2013. The use of endophytes and mycorrhizae in switchgrass biomass production. In *Compendium of Bioenergy Plants: Switchgrass* (H. Luo and Y. Wu, eds.). CRC Press, Boca Raton, pp. 67-108.

Chen, Y., **Day, S.,** Shrestha, R. Strahm, B., and P. Wiseman. 2014. Influence of urban land development and soil rehabilitation on soil-atmosphere greenhouse gas fluxes. *Geoderma*. 348-353.

Scoggins, H.L. 2014. Getting started in the production of field-grown cut flowers. Virginia Cooperative Extension Publication #426-618, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA. 10 pp.
<http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-618/426-618.html>

Scoggins, H.L. 2014. Marketing specialty cut flowers. *Community, Local and Regional Food Systems*, eXtension.org.

<http://www.extension.org/pages/70577/marketing-specialty-cut-flowers#.U4d2wii4N5A>

Hayley Billings is a Fralin Sumer Scholar working in **Megan O'Rourke's** lab this summer. Haley is a rising senior in the Human Nutrition, Foods, and Exercise department. The title of her project is "Health Impacts of Community Supported Agriculture".



New High Tunnel at the Urban Horticulture Center: This tunnel is the first step in a collaborative effort between Horticulture and Dining Services to build educational and research capacity for extended-season crop production at the UHC. The produce will be served in University dining halls along with the harvest from the Dining farm at Kentland. We have both determinate and indeterminate tomatoes utilizing stake-and-weave and overhead trellising systems, along with slicing cucumbers, peppers, and basil. - by **Alex Hessler**

Greg Peck and **Mark Williams** were awarded a three-year grant from the Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research and Extension (S-SARE) program entitled, "Towards ecologically-based fertilizer recommendations that improve soil quality in high-density apple orchards". The focus of the grant is to develop environmentally sound fertilizer recommendation for Mid-Atlantic apple orchards. **Cody Kieffer** will be starting a PhD program with *Greg* and *Mark* to work on this project. Welcome aboard, *Cody*!

Greg Peck's hard cider research was recently featured in the Wall Street Journal and Market Watch Radio. Cider is the fastest growing sector of the alcoholic beverage industry. *Greg* and colleagues from Ag Econ and FST are helping support Virginia's cider producers with a range of new research projects. Many of these can be found on his website: <http://www.ares.vaes.vt.edu/alson-h-smith/treefruit/horticulture/hard-cider/>.

Student Virtual Reality Project Demonstrates Psychological Response to Plants

Chris Gore (LCON), **Landon Prever** (LCON), Ty Vaden (Turf), and Daniel Al-Abdrabbuh (Computer Engineering) took first place out of 13 class projects in HORT 2134 Plants and Greenspaces in Urban Communities. Students researched psychological response to landscapes and its effect on human well being and then created a virtual reality simulation to let classmates experience the effects for themselves. Visitors to the project put on a virtual reality visor and could "look around" and "walk through" two landscapes that were identical except for the presence of trees and shrub plantings. Student response to the "unplanted" landscape? "Get me out of here!" Plants and Greenspaces in Urban Communities is a university core curriculum class taught by **Susan Day** that focuses on the contribution of plants to urban sustainability and the challenges inherent in creating urban greenspaces.



Table arrangements grown by students in our Ornamental Plant Production and Marketing class (taught by **Holly Scoggins**) graced all the tables at the recent celebration for 100 years of the Cooperative Extension service. One lucky person at each table had a star on the back of their program brochure, indicating that they could take the plants home with them after the celebration!



Projects on display from the new Digital Photography class taught by **Robert McDuffie**



Graduation festivities at the Hahn Horticulture Pavilion

Pi Alpha Xi Service Project at Pandapas Pond

This April, Virginia Tech Kappa Chapter members of Pi Alpha Xi (PAX), the Honor Society for Horticulture, started a new service project at Pandapas Pond in the Jefferson National Forest. Under the direction of Barbara Walker, Volunteer Coordinator of the Eastern Divide Ranger District (U.S. Forest Service), the pollinator garden has been planted and maintained by various community groups, each assigned a bed section. Barbara gave PAX three sections to renovate. PAX President **Colleen Beard** along with **Matthew Cox** and **Michael Fulcher** led the members in forming a work group, Holly gathered the appropriate perennials (the pollinator garden is "all native"), and the dirt flew! Overgrown plants were ripped out, compost was worked into the soil, and plants installed. The crowning touch was Matthew Cox's acquisition of a 2" caliper B&B Amelanchier. Barbara was very impressed by the efficiency and professionalism of the crew from Horticulture. Pay a visit to the pollinator garden and I'll bet you can figure out what section PAX is managing! We look forward to maintaining the garden and helping Barbara in her efforts to educate the public on pollinator-friendly plants. - Holly Scoggins, Pi Alpha Xi faculty advisor



Left Photo: PAX action selfie! Right Photo: The Pandapas Pollinator Garden Project Crew: from left, Travis Wagoner, Michael Fulcher, Matthew Cox, Bobby Nance, Michael Cox, and Colleen Beard. Photo by Holly Scoggins