

Department of Horticulture

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Dr. Roger Harris, Department Head

March 2015

Greetings everyone! Blacksburg has been beautifully dressed in a veil of snow for most of this past month. It is a great time to hone your plant winter-interest observation eye. The contrast of colorful or exfoliating bark and seed pods against the white backdrop can be quite striking. You can also rest assured that the snow blanket will soon release a host of blooming bulbs and spring break must be around the corner. We are all busy with mid semester class projects and students are gearing up for this year's PLANET trip to N.C. State University in Raleigh (more on that later). I am very grateful to all that have supported our students by contributing to our upcoming trip. It is a wonderful experience for them and we couldn't go without your help. - With kind regards, *Roger*



Update from the Farm

While the Dining Services Horticulture Farm at Kentland is still smothered by snow, the high tunnel at the Urban Horticulture Center is in full production. Students in Organic Vegetable Production learned about growing winter greens under plastic, and brought in the first harvest of lettuce mix on January 26th! Beginning March 3rd, students in the Sustainable Agriculture Practicum will join in the task of early season farm activities. After propagating broccoli, tomato, and pepper transplants at the UHC the focus will shift to preparing the fields at Kentland for potatoes, sweet corn, and green beans.



Harvesting greens in the hightunnel

Undergraduate Updates

The VNLA will be giving all Horticulture seniors and 2nd year Ag Tech a free one-year membership and the opportunity to become a Virginia Certified Horticulturalist. This will give them an opportunity to engage more with the industry before they graduate and be even more qualified and prepared as they begin their careers.



Hightunnel covered in snow!



Normand Adams,
Phi Kappa Phi
Medallion Award
recipient

As the top graduating senior in CALS, Normand Adams received the 2015 Phi Kappa Phi Medallion Award. Congratulations, Normand!

Graduate Student Updates

At the beginning of February, Jeb Fields and Jake Schreckhise, competed in the Warren S. Barham PhD and Norman F. Childers MS student paper/presentation competitions, respectively, at the SR-ASHS in Atlanta, GA. Jake won first place in the Norman F. Childers MS competition and Jeb provided a very competitive presentation in the doctorate competition.

Congratulations to Jeb Fields for being awarded the Massey Scholarship for International Horticulture. He plans to use the funding to attend a conference in Austria.

New Online Master's Video



Holly Scoggins was featured in the new Online Master's of Life Sciences promotional video. Check it out here: <https://vimeo.com/99059514>

Outreach

Megan O'Rourke presented a talk at UVA to the environmental sciences department entitled, "Landscape ecology & food: an interdisciplinary approach to agriculture". She and her student, Celia Silverstein, also presented at the Eastern Shore Conference: "Harnessing biodiversity on your farm"

Holly Scoggins was interviewed by Margaret Roach for "A Way to Garden," one of the top garden blogs, for her public radio podcast. Read the article at <http://awaytogarden.com/shop-plants-experts-eye-holly-scoggins/> which also includes a link to her public radio podcast from Robin Hood Radio.

Joyce Latimer presented an invited talk on PGR use at the Society of American Florists Pest and Production Conference in sunny Orlando Feb. 19-21.

Hahn Horticulture Garden Events

May 1-3, 2015 (Friday to Sunday) Get an early taste of spring and join us on a spring garden tour of the piedmont area of North Carolina. The itinerary includes Duke Gardens, NC Botanical Gardens, JC Raulston Arboretum, Plant Delights Nursery, New Garden Nursery and two private gardens.

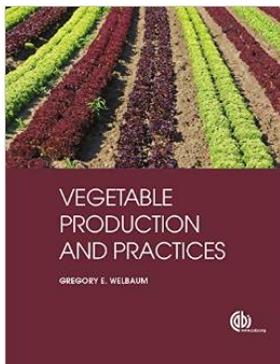


We'll be traveling in a luxury motor coach (a bus) with plenty of space to bring back some nursery purchases. The cost is \$375 for Friends of the Hahn as well as faculty and staff in the department. Here is the website for more information and registration forms: www.mcduff.hort.vt.edu/CarolinaSpring2015/Index.html

Awards

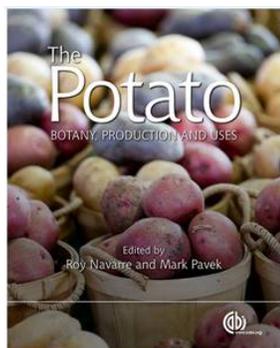
Megan O'Rourke was awarded a \$10,000 New Investigator Award from the Fralin Life Sciences Institute. Congratulations, Megan!

Publications



Greg Welbaum who has taught Vegetable Crop classes (Hort 4764 and 5764) online and in the classroom for many years has written a book *Vegetable Production and Practices* published by CAB International. The first two chapters can be previewed at: <http://www.cabi.org/openresources/45346/>. The soft, hardcover, and E-book versions are available through Amazon <http://www.amazon.com/Vegetable-Production-Practices-Gregory-Welbaum/dp/184593802X>. The E-book version is also available from Google Play (https://play.google.com/store/books/details/Gregory_E_Welbaum_Vegetable_Production_and_Practic?id=zq4tBgAAQBAJ&hl=en_GB).

Virginia Tech students and faculty can access a free E-copy through the VT library portal: <http://virginia.cabi.patron.eb20.com>



Richard Veilleux and his former postdoc, Tatiana Boluarte Medina, worked together to contribute a chapter to a recent book published by CAB International on potato biology. Their chapter "Molecular Breeding of Potato in the Postgenomic Era," describes the new toolkit of techniques that can be applied to potato improvement as a result of the publication of the potato genome in 2011.

Fields, J.S., Brindley, J., Owen, J., and Atland, J. 2015. Understanding Growing Media. *Grower Talks* Vol. 78 No. 10. <http://www.ballpublishing.com/growertalks/ViewArticle.aspx?articleid=21311>

Scoggins, H.L. 2015. How plants get to market. *Fine Gardening*. April: 22-26.

Strickler, S.R., A. Bombarely, J.D. Munkvold, T. York, N. Menda, G.B. Martin, and L.A. Mueller. 2015. Comparative genomics and phylogenetic discordance of cultivated tomato and close wild relatives. *PeerJ* 3:e793 <http://dx.doi.org/10.7717/peerj.793>



A sampling of creations from Barbara Leshyn's Advanced Floral Design class. Photos by Pris Sears.