

Department of Horticulture

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Dr. Roger Harris, Department Head

April 2015

Greetings everyone! It has been an eventful month for us on campus as the plan for a new School of Plant and Environmental Sciences was recently announced (see announcement below by our dean, Dr. Alan Grant). The formation of such a school was put forward in the university strategic plan (2013-2018). As such, our department will technically be dissolved next summer and Horticulture will live as an essential component of the new school. This kind of streamlining of academic units has been going on across many universities. I am optimistic that horticulture can flourish in the new school. We are early on in the planning stage for the school and there is much to determine. Please see <http://news.cals.vt.edu/spes/> for an update on progress and to leave comments and suggestions. Meanwhile, spring has finally arrived on campus and it is a great time to check out the progression of flowering plants at the Hahn Horticulture Garden. It is truly an exciting time of year. Our much anticipated Horticulture Club Plant Sale and Spring Fling will be April 23-25th and the Garden Gala is scheduled for June 13.

- With kind regards, *Roger*



Announcing the New School of Plant and Environmental Sciences

The Department of Horticulture will be joining forces with Crop & Soil Environmental Sciences and Plant Pathology, Physiology, and Weed Science to form the School of Plant and Environmental Sciences. The vision is to create a School of Plant and Environmental Sciences within the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences that will increase the visibility, opportunities, and impact of our existing learning, discovery, and engagement programs.

By capitalizing on the strengths of the Departments of Crop and Soil Environmental Sciences, Horticulture, and Plant Pathology, Physiology, and Weed Sciences, the school will be able to make investments to increase our capacity and tackle the many challenges in agriculture and food security, the green industry, plant biology, and the environment.



Dean Alan Grant

Undergraduate Updates

PLANET!!!

Virginia Tech, Horticulture and Agricultural Technology, students placed 14th overall at this year's PLANET Competition and Student Career Days. North Carolina State hosted the event with an attendance of over 67 schools.



The group stopped and toured Hoffman Nurseries and Ruppert Landscape on their way to the event. We thank both companies for taking time out of their busy schedules to show our students life on the other side of graduation.

As a team we placed 3rd in Landscape Maintenance Operations and 4th in Irrigation Troubleshooting. We had two team members, for whom this was their fourth PLANET SCDs competition, Matt Cox and Chris Gore. Matt placed 4th overall in the running for Superstar. We are very proud of the hard work all of our students put into the competition. All the students attended the career fair with many of our students interviewing for internships and employment on site.

We would like to thank, Chapman Williams/William Brothers Tree and Lawn Service, Mark Maslow/Southern Landscape Group, Mike Hildebrand/James River Nurseries, Jay Long/Ruppert Nurseries, Brickman Group, Alan Jones/Bartlett Tree Expert Co., Juanita and Steve Griggs/Grigg Design, Peter Murray/Hidden Lane Landscape, Don and Mennen Middlebrooks/Tidewater Landworks, Hahn Horticulture Garden and the VNLA for their contributions. We had a few students who we took on scholarship this year, they would not have made it to the competition had it not been for the generous support of all of you in the industry. Barbara Leshyn, John James and Tom Martin were the advisors for the trip.

Team

3rd place – Landscape Maintenance Operations – Cole Lowery, Bobby Nance

4th place – Irrigation Troubleshooting – Joseph Ruddy, Matthew Cox

Individual

1st place – Matthew Borden – Plant Problem Diagnosis

2nd place – Matthew Cox – Construction Cost Estimating

3rd place – Christa Bush – Turf and Weed ID

8th place – Carl Simmons – Skid Steer Loader Operation

9th place – Chris Gore – 3D Exterior Landscape Design

10th place – James Rockwell – Business Management

12th place – Normand Adams – Business Management

13th place – Maddie Pequigney – Sales Presentation

14th place – Derek Bowman – Computer Aided Design

16th place – Derek Bowman – Exterior Landscape Design

16th place – Alicia Nester – Annual/Perennial ID

18th place – Elizabeth Wilson – Plant Problem Diagnosis

23rd place – Alysha Lawless – Annual/Perennial ID

25th place – Danielle Dinges – Turf and Weed ID

25th place – Joseph Ruddy – Irrigation Design



In addition, Robert Nance received the 2015 PLANET Academic Excellence Foundation Scholarship- Congratulations!

Floral Design for the Grove

The Floral Design 2 students are the new floral designers for The Grove. Dr. Laura Sands and staff have graciously opened their doors to our students. The Floral Design 2 students will work closely with staff to provide floral arrangements for various events at The Grove. Their first assignment was for the Board of Visitors dinner held this past weekend.



Congratulations to James Rockwell for receiving the Outstanding Ambassador award at the CALS Alumni Awards Ceremony!



Students James Rockwell and Amy Puckett setting up flower arrangements at the Grove.

Fresh Produce Food Safety Team welcomes 2 undergraduate workers!



Hunter Wyatt (top) and Chaz Ramsey will be working with the FPFs Team this summer

We are pleased to warmly welcome two new undergraduate student workers, Chaz Ramsey and Hunter Wyatt, who will be working closely with Amber Vallotton as part of the Fresh Produce Food Safety Team grant projects. Chaz Ramsey is from New Hope, Virginia, and is a Junior at Virginia Tech majoring in Agricultural Science with a minor in Leadership. After college he hopes to work with Virginia Cooperative Extension and continue work on his family beef and sheep farm. Chaz will be assisting Amber and the project team on the extension outreach part of a USDA NIFA project focused on understanding antibiotic resistance in manures and best practices to reduce persistence on farm. Hunter Wyatt is a Junior who is double majoring in Agriculture Science and Community Leadership along with Environmental Policy and Planning. He has two minors to accompany his majors in Leadership and Social Change, along with Crop and Soil Environmental Science. Hunter has been a member of the Virginia Tech Soil Judging Team, and a University Honors Scholar. He hopes to obtain a position working for Cooperative Extension or USDA after he graduates, and then potentially continue to graduate school. Hunter will be integrally involved in the development of resource materials for on-farm food safety, including the creation of YouTube videos and a dynamic website. We are also happy to note that Hunter is a part of the 2015 VCE internship program this summer!

Awards and Recognition

Congratulations to Cindy Melvin, CALS February Employee of the Month! Her nominator noted that “she is one of the hardest workers I have ever been around and housekeeping is not an easy job” and that her “work ethics gain respect and appreciation from me and others, but she doesn’t hear as much as she deserves.” Read the entire story [here](#).



CALS February Employee of the Month, Cindy Melvin, receiving her award from Alan Grant

Horticulture's Outstanding Alumni Awards

Sonya Westervelt ('05) and William Foster ('82) were recognized at the CALS Alumni Awards Ceremony this past week.

Sonya Westervelt, of Arrington, Virginia was awarded Outstanding Recent Alumna. She is a regional sales associate for Saunders Brothers Inc.

- She serves as a member of the Horticulture Department's Advisory Board.
- Sonya is a program Advocate for the Longwood Graduate Program in Public Horticulture at the University of Delaware, where she received her master's degree.
- She is serving as president of the Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association.
- During her term as vice president she coordinated the association's field day that was hosted by the Virginia Tech Horticulture Department specifically in an attempt to raise awareness of new initiatives in and to strengthen the industry's connection with the department and college.
- Sonya has been involved with the Hahn Horticulture Gala for several years as a volunteer, sponsor, and honorary host.
- She has led the Amherst-Nelson Chapter of the VT Alumni Association and was active in the First State Chapter of the VT Alumni Association.



Outstanding Recent Alumna, Sonya Westervelt, standing between Roger Harris and Alan Grant. Photo by Zeke Barlow.

Bill Foster, of Victor, New York, was awarded Outstanding Alumnus. He is the president, CEO, and co-owner of BioWorks, Inc., a leader in providing environmentally responsible, safe, and effective solutions to the growing needs of the horticulture, turfgrass, and specialty agriculture industries.

- BioWorks is a member of several industry organizations and participates in the American Floral Endowment Scholarship Program offering the "BioWorks IPM/Sustainable Practices Scholarship to sophomores, juniors, or seniors pursuing a career in floriculture.
- He provides service to GardenAerial, a development project that is set to become New York State's first EcoDistrict, providing working examples of sustainable practices, zero-net energy usages, total materials management, and a respect for the natural environment.
- Bill interacts with CALS faculty on development of commercial/university research projects and counsels the Horticulture Department on recent research and commercial plant pest and nutrition innovations for curriculum and course content development.



Outstanding Alumnus, William Foster, standing between Roger Harris and Alan Grant. Photo by Zeke Barlow.

Outreach

Holly Scoggins served on the organizing committee and attended the first annual 2015 NC/VA Regional Hops Conference and Beginning Grower Workshop, held March 13 and 14, 2015 at the Forsyth County Extension Center, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

Hahn Horticulture Garden Events

Dwarf Conifers in the Landscape

with Pamela Cadmus of Specialty Garden Design Wednesday April 15, 12:00-1:00 p.m.



The number of dwarf and slow-growing conifers available to the home gardener (and collectors) is staggering! Conifers add year round interest to the garden with color, texture, and form. Pamela will discuss and highlight the best uses of dwarf conifers in the landscape. She owns the Specialty Garden Design & Nursery, grows conifers for sale, and has the 'conifer addiction syndrome.'

Hort Club Plant Sale and Spring Fling!

Garden Tour, gardening talks... and plants, plants, plants!!! Mark your calendar for April 23-25th and stay tuned for more information.

Fruit Tree Grafting Workshop

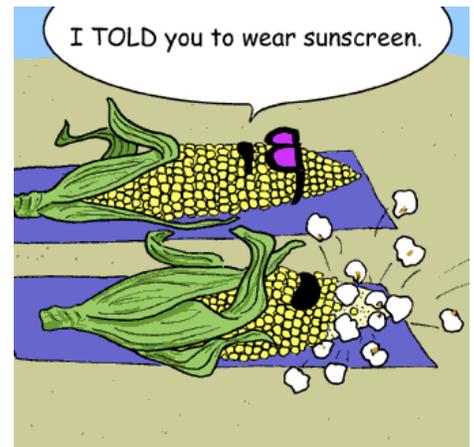
Saturday, May 2. 9 to 11:30am at the Hahn Pavilion.

Join Historic Smithfield Plantation and the Hahn Horticulture 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 trees.

\$16 per registrant, pre registration required. Call Smithfield to register (540) 231-3947

GALA GALA GALA!

Mark your calendar for June 13, 2015 - our 11th annual gala!



Publications

Jervis J., S.B. Hildreth, X. Sheng, E.P. Beers, A.M. Brunner, R.F. Helm, 2015. A metabolomic assessment of NAC154 transcription factor overexpression in field grown poplar stem wood. *Phytochemistry*.

doi:10.1016/j.phytochem.2015.02.013

Lava-Chavez, A., J.S. Lowman, S. Kim-Dura, Y. Tang, J. Ahang, M. Udvardi, J. Nowak, B. Flinn, and C. Mei. 2015. Global gene expression profiling of two switchgrass cultivars following inoculation with *Burkholderia phytofirmans* strain PsJN. *J. Exp. Bot.* doi.1093/jxb/erv096.

Aulakh SS, Veilleux RE, Tang G, Flinn BS. 2015. Characterization of a potato activation-tagged mutant, nikku, and its partial revertant. *Planta*. 2015 Mar 13.