

Department of *Horticulture*

Saunders Hall, Blacksburg, VA 24061
www.hort.vt.edu (540) 231- 5451

Dr. Roger Harris, Department Head

December 2015

Greetings everyone! November was a bountiful month around Saunders Hall with pie pumpkins, butternut squash and other goodies showing up frequently. VT dining services recently celebrated their collaboration with our department and CALS by hosting a wonderful lunch at Kentland Farm that featured many of the vegetables grown by Alex Hessler, his students, and dining service employees. Almost 50,000 lbs. of fresh produce was grown and delivered to the VT dining halls this past season (see below). Look for these delicious and healthy offerings at Owens and other the other dining halls – you will be glad you did! The short period between Thanksgiving and the end of the semester is always an interesting time with a lot of activity. Students are very busy finalizing projects and studying for end-of-semester exams. A nice break and a fresh start are on the horizon. The various planning committees for formation of the School of Plant and Environmental Sciences have turned in their final reports so we should soon see things taking shape. Meanwhile... it has been a warm fall and we are still looking for our first snowfall of the season - quite a difference from last year. However, it is Blacksburg and things could (will) change dramatically! I hope that you enjoy this edition of our monthly e-newsletter. Please pass it on! — *Roger*



Undergraduate News

Students in the Sustainable Agriculture Practicum course held a fall potluck and cider pressing to celebrate another successful year growing fresh fruit and vegetables at the Dining Services Horticulture Farm at Kentland Farm. **A record 47,500 pounds of produce was harvested and delivered to campus dining halls at Virginia Tech this year.**

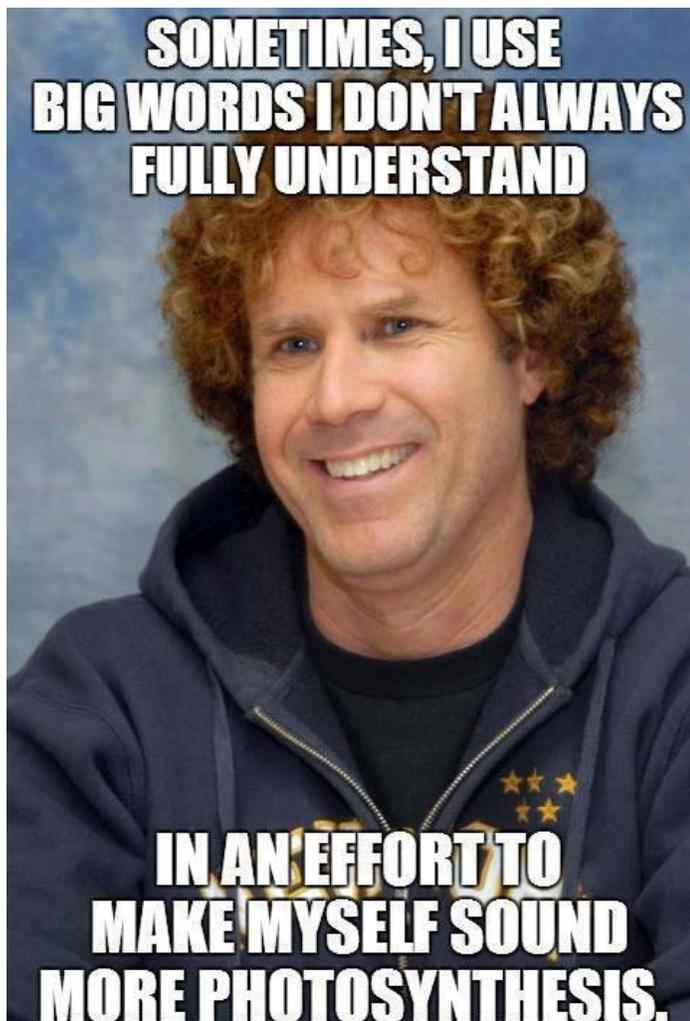
A story in last week's issue of the Delmarva Farmer highlighted hands-on experience in organic and sustainable vegetable production students gain in Alex Hessler's class, Sustainable Agriculture Practicum: http://americanfarm.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2653:va-tech-food-services-farm-teaches-students-more-than-crop-production&catid=2



Outreach

Ramon Arancibia is in Bangladesh participating in a program with Tennessee State University and Bangladesh Agricultural University to assist small vegetable farmers in Bangladesh with the support of a USAID-VEGA and Farmer to Farmer program.

This project will strengthen the capacity of small vegetable farmers in Bangladesh to improve sustainable production of fresh vegetable crops off season/year-round. The technology level used by small farmers and the availability of tools and material for sustainable production are being assessed. Potential technologies for off season vegetable production including protected production systems are being introduced. Enhancing the production capacity of farmers to extend production year-round is expected to improve their transition from subsistence agriculture to commercial agriculture and increase supply of fresh and healthier vegetables in rural and urban areas.



Conferences

Susan Day moderated a symposium, Carbon Storage and Dynamics in Urban Soils, at the annual meeting of the Soil Science Society of America (SSSA) in Minneapolis in November. The symposium included a presentation, A Local, Regional and Global Perspective of C Storage in Urban Soils she co-authored with Rich Pouyat and Ian Yesilonis of the U.S. Forest Service and Yujuan Chen of the FAO in Rome, Italy. Dr. Day is the incoming chair of the Urban and Anthropogenic Soils Division of the SSSA.

Megan O'Rourke presented a paper at the entomological society of America's national meeting in Minneapolis on November 17th titled "Extending the resource concentration hypothesis to the landscape scale." It was an invited presentation part of the session "Habitat management for agricultural pest control."

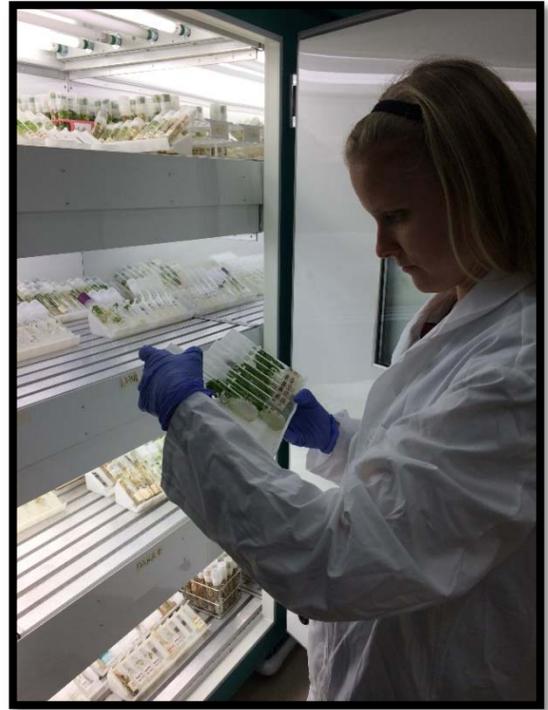
Graduate Student Rachel Seman-Varner presented at the ASA/CSSA/SSSA meeting a talk titled, "N benefits of cover crop and fall-applied poultry litter management schemes in corn". The talk was in the Nitrogen Science and Management session of the SSSA Soil Fertility and Plant Nutrition Division.



A Passion for Plants and Medicine

By Martha Netanya Poe, Environmental Horticulture May 2016

While a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Horticulture is anything but typical for a pre-pharmacy student, the lessons learned and skills obtained have been invaluable in helping me develop into the type of professional I aspire to be. The experience working in Dr. Richard Veilleux's plant genetics research lab has drawn on many of my natural inclinations such as attention to detail, organization, and a sincere regard for life and funneled them into my current job as a Pharmacy Technician. These qualities are necessary for anyone entering a health professional field. Just as a mistake in research can have serious consequences, a mistake when caring for a person's health can carry all the more gravity. The high level of respect for life and moral integrity necessary for research is something I intend to incorporate into caring for my patients throughout my career.



Studying horticulture has also allowed me to complete the many science and math pre-requisites needed for pharmacy school and also obtain a well-rounded classical education. Courses such as Economics have given me insight into why a medication costs a certain price, Chemistry allows me to understand how the medication works and Sociology allows me to better care for people. If there is any one lesson I have gleaned from my time at Virginia Tech it is that every experience has intrinsic value and that knowledge can always be used to better someone's life.

For more information about me visit my electronic portfolio at <http://marthanetanyapoe.weebly.com/>.



Photos Credits:

Top: Inspecting potato plants for pathogens.
 Bottom Right: Pharmacy- www.weebly.com;
 Mortar and pestle- www.123rf.com
 Bottom: Tuber field trial harvest.

Visitors

We would like to welcome Ahmad Mustafa to the department. Ahmad is a Ph.D. student who comes from Faisalabad Agricultural University, Pakistan. Ahmad will be working in Greg Welbaum's lab at the CRC on developing seed priming techniques for agronomic agriculture in Pakistan.

Jaime Jimenez (Postdoc) from University of Jaen is visited Aure Bombarely's lab for the month of November to work in the assembly of the olive genome. Mario Fenech (PhD student) from University of Malaga visited

Aure Bombarely's lab for three months (September to November) to work in the evolutionary analysis of the Vitamin C biosynthesis pathway in plants.

Publications

Castro et al. "De novo assembly and functional annotation of Myrciaria dubia fruit transcriptome reveals multiple metabolic pathways for L-ascorbic acid biosynthesis". BMC Genomics 2015, 16:997 (<http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2164/16/997>).

Hahn Horticulture Garden Events

Oil Landscapes by Marie Collier

November 1 - December 31, 2015 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Free. This installation for Art in the Garden will be works by Marie Collier. Collier focuses her landscape oil pieces on color manipulation to make them bold and intense. She invites her viewers to see the landscapes through unpredictable pathways of color, rather than purely how nature or man present it.

Virginia Big Tree Program

Wednesday, December 2 noon to 1pm,
Hahn Horticulture Pavilion
Free. Eric Wiseman is Associate Professor of Urban Forestry at Virginia Tech and Coordinator of the Virginia Big Tree Program. The goal of the Virginia Big Tree Program is to increase the care and appreciation for trees by documenting the largest specimens of native and non-native species found in the state. There are 21 state champions in Montgomery County. Several are on the Virginia Tech campus, including the champion paperbark maple (*Acer griseum*) in the Hahn Horticulture Garden. In this presentation, Dr. Wiseman will give an overview of the Virginia Big Tree Program and show you how to measure and nominate a tree for the big tree register.

Christmas at the Hahn

December 14, 2015 6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.
Hahn Horticulture Pavilion
Free. Come celebrate the season! You are invited to a Christmas open house! Enjoy light refreshments with other garden lovers as we celebrate the season. This event is free and open to the public. Just drop in any time between 6pm and 9pm at the Hahn Garden Pavilion, just off Washington Street on Campus.

