

# Department of Horticulture

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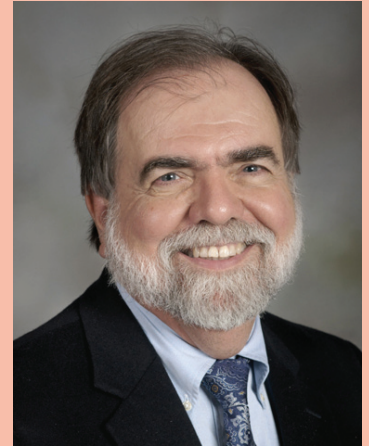


*Dr. Roger Harris, Department Head*

## February 2017

Greetings everyone! The beginning of the month finds us with a lot of activity around campus, but the snow shovels are still in the garage. However, it is Blacksburg and the shovels could (will) be called into action! The end of the second week of classes is upon us and everyone seems to be getting into the swing of the new semester. We are very happy to welcome our new Tree Fruit specialist, Dr. Sherif Sherif to our faculty (see the following page). Barbara Leshyn and the Hort Hokies are gearing up for a trip out to Utah for the 2017 National Collegiate Landscape Competition at Brigham Young University. Barbara is assisted by the able hands of John James (Hort Department) and Tom Martin (Ag Tech Program). This is an annual event that rotates among schools and is a great opportunity for our students to network with companies and other like-minded students from different universities. The friendly competition is always fun and students get an up close look at the vibrant green industry. The trip would not be possible without the support of our many friends. We sincerely thank all who have donated for this trip and for trips in the past. The proposed School of Plant and Environmental Sciences is moving toward a reality. A committee has been formed to look for a Director of the school. We are also in the process of looking for a Director of the Hahn Horticulture Garden. The person filling this position will also teach our design classes and play a key role in our undergraduate program development. I will give a progress report in next month's newsletter on both of these positions. Have you ordered your Valentine roses yet? Our Horticulture club can come to the rescue! They do a fabulous job and the roses are always of exceptional quality at a very reasonable price. I hope that you enjoy this edition of our monthly e-newsletter. Please pass it on!

*— Roger*



## Horticulture Hokies are ready to compete!

A few of the students headed to Utah to compete in the 2017 National Collegiate Landscape Competition at Brigham Young University. Virginia Tech will be sending 15 students (from five different majors!) and 3 faculty members to compete in the competition this year. We would like to thank all our sponsors who have donated towards the trip. We are only \$3000.00 from our goal!



*From left to right: Justice Schlemmer, Rachel LaFlamme, Leanne Bell, Laura Yuhase, Tim Bell. Photo by Barbara Leshyn*

## Welcome New Horticulture Faculty Member Sherif M. Sherif!

We are very pleased to announce that Sherif M. Sherif has been hired as Assistant Professor of Horticulture, refilling our vacant tree fruits horticulturist position at the Alson H. Smith Jr. Agricultural Research and Extension Center (AREC). Dr. Sherif will be responsible for developing research and extension programs that support and improve the productivity and profitability of Virginia fruit producers. Dr. Sherif will be based at the AHS AREC, but will have administrative ties to the Department of Horticulture and, later in 2017, the newly created School of Plant and Environmental Sciences within the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Dr. Sherif received his BSc (with honors) and his MSc degrees in pomology from Alexandria University (Egypt), and his PhD from the University of Guelph (2011), Ontario, Canada. His doctoral work characterized signaling pathways associated with resistance to bacterial spot disease of peach. Since 2012, Dr. Sherif has served as a post-doctoral fellow and research associate, principally in the Department of Plant Agriculture at the University of Guelph. Please join us in welcoming Sherif to Virginia Tech.



## Meetings

Richard Veilleux presented a talk entitled “Genomic Heterogeneity of Potato” in the “Solanaceae Workshop” at the 25th Plant and Animal Genome Conference in San Diego on Jan. 15, 2017. The talk summarized the recent efforts to understand the polyploid potato genome using reduced complexity derivatives obtained by chromosome reduction. The work was completed through the efforts of a team of five PIs and 15 postdocs, grad students and technicians at three institutions, including 12 at Michigan State University, four at the University of Wisconsin and four Virginia Tech.

Megan O’Rourke and her post-doc Gina angelella were invited to present their research about native wildflower habitats and biological control at the annual VABF (Virginia Association for Biological Farming) conference on January 8.

### November 1

We ripped plastic mulch and drip tape from the sweet potato fields and planted garlic. We emerged as trash queens on this day.



### From Daisy Sturgill’s Farm Photojournal

See more photos here: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0wpmwB4lvy\\_cWJaaE45YUIOTjQ/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0wpmwB4lvy_cWJaaE45YUIOTjQ/view)



## Awards

Congratulations to Jim Owen, who received the Extension Communication Award for his Grozone Tracker mobile app!

Jim Owen will receive a Blue Ribbon Extension Publication Award at the annual meeting of the Southern Region of the American Society for Horticultural Science in February. The award was initiated in 1987 to recognize outstanding contribution to the understanding of horticultural subjects reported in written, video, audio and electronic form, including internet based formats. The award serves to give those authors of extension publications recognition among their peers and administrators.

Congratulations to Horticulture Alumnus Mark Maslow ('04), who was named NALP's Young Entrepreneur of the Year award!!

Read more here: <http://www.soscapes.com/mark-maslow-recipient-nalps-prestigious-young-entrepreneur-year-award/>

## Grants

Parker Laimbeer, a Ph.D. candidate in the Veilleux lab, received a \$3,000 grant from the Translational Plant Science graduate student grant competition for his proposal entitled, "Copy Number Variation and Glycoalkaloid Synthesis Investigated through Exome Capture in a Recombinant Monoploid Potato Population."



Undergraduate students Carly Estes left and Chelsea Smalley right work on their undergraduate research project "Forced Asparagus Production" in Greg Welbaum's lab at the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center.

## Publications

DeLong CN, Yoder KS, Combs L, Veilleux RE, Peck GM (2016) Apple Pollen Tube Growth Rates Are Regulated by Parentage and Environment. *J Am Soc Hort Sci* 141: 548-554.

Soorni A, Haak D, Zaitlin D, Bombarely A. "Organelle\_PBA, a pipeline for assembling chloroplast and mitochondrial genomes from PacBio DNA sequencing data". *BMC Genomics* 18 (1), 49.

A video describing setup and uses of the new gusseted thermogradient table developed in Greg Welbaum's lab has been posted online by the Journal of Visualized Experiments at: <https://www.jove.com/video/54647/a-gusseted-thermogradient-table-to-control-soil-temperatures-for>

## Hahn Horticulture Garden Events

**Thursday February 9th, 6:30 to 8:30pm** The Joy of Gardening: The Power of Plants to Change Your Point of View with Bryce Lane

Gardening has tremendous power to change our perspective, not just in the garden but also in life. Working with plants changes the way we look at all sorts of things. Come see an entertaining and inspiring talk about how gardening can change your life!

Price \$15 general public and \$10 Friends of the Garden.

Please register by Monday February 6, 2017 by contacting Stephanie at [vtgarden@vt.edu](mailto:vtgarden@vt.edu) or 540-231-5970.

Learn at Lunch **Wednesdays noon to 1pm** at the Hahn Pavilion- FREE!

- February 8th, The Design Giants of the English Landscape School with Robert McDuffie
- February 22nd, The Style Spreads: Old Russia to the New World with Robert McDuffie
- March 15th, Backyard Chickens with Erica Jones, Master Gardener

For more information please visit <http://www.hort.vt.edu/hhg/events.html> or contact the Hahn Garden by phone, 540-231-5970, or by email, [vtgarden@vt.edu](mailto:vtgarden@vt.edu).



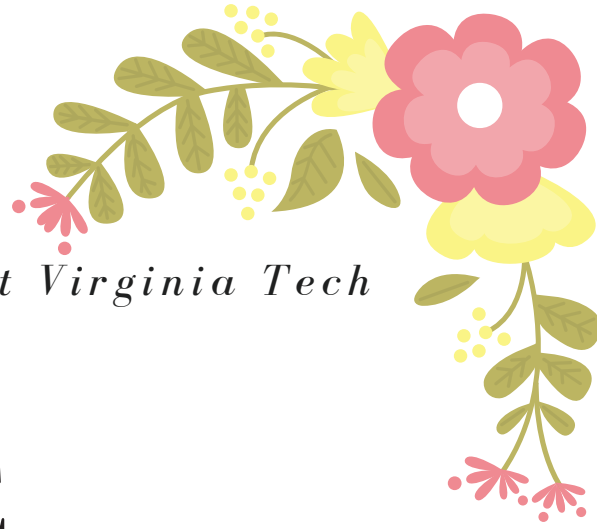
Topiary creations at Busch Gardens in Tampa, FL by Alumnus Joe Parr ('83)



Alumna Holly Chichester ('99) posted this on our departmental Facebook page on January 20th:

Happy Florida Arbor Day, VT Hort. :) We are celebrating our fifth state Arbor Day at Florida Tech and our fourth as a Tree Campus USA. We planted five *Taxodium distichum*...one for each year we've honored the day. :) It's because of VT Horticulture that I do what I do...because of your amazing faculty and staff--past and present--and how you are magnet for stellar students and programs and projects. You always lead the way. You produce critical, creative thinkers and doers and stewards of the earth. I will be forever grateful for my days in Saunders and surrounds. *Ut Prosim* (and *Ad Astra Per Scientiam* - "To the stars through science.")





*The Horticulture Club at Virginia Tech  
Presents*

# THE VALENTINES DAY ROSE SALE

FEBRUARY 13TH 4:30 TO 6:30

FEBRUARY 14TH 10 AM TO 6:30 PM

*In basement of Saunders*

*Red and mixed rose arrangements available!*

*We do on-campus deliveries for \$3*

<i>roses</i>	<i>wrapped</i>	<i>arranged in a vase</i>
1	\$3	\$5
3	\$6	\$10
6	\$18	\$20
12	\$30	\$40

*To pre-order please email [rosesale@vt.edu](mailto:rosesale@vt.edu) before Feb 9th*

