

Department of Horticulture

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Dr. Roger Harris, Department Head

May 2017

Greetings everyone! The end of the academic year is upon us and campus is a frenzy of activity as students finish up semester projects and prepare for finals. A sense of excitement is everywhere as students anticipate summer travel and internships and faculty and staff prepare for much-deserved vacations. We are excited to welcome 15 graduating seniors to our alumni family (see below). We are very proud of all of our new graduates and wish them the very best as they enter a new phase of their life. It is very satisfying to see them prosper and become leaders in our field. Permanent Blacksburg residents anxiously await the quiet that follows the excitement after graduation. The week after graduation and the first week of classes in the fall when the excitement returns are two of the best things about Blacksburg! All worry of late freezes are behind us and we are now trying to keep up with the fast growing lawns. All of the recent rains have brought out the neighborhood lawnmowers in force. We will take a summer break from the e-newsletters and return with a September edition that is broadcast from the School of Plant and Environmental Science. We are currently interviewing for a Director of the school so we will hopefully have one in place come time for the September edition. This is the last edition of the

e-newsletter that I will be editing since I am stepping down as our Department Head at the end of this semester to rejoin the teaching/research faculty. It has been a real honor and privilege to serve our

department as Head for the last 9 years. Dr. Richard Veilleux will be the new Interim Head and he will lead us through the transition to the new school. Dr. Veilleux served as our Interim Head for 6 months in 2014 when I took my leave of absence to hike the Appalachian Trail. That experience, plus his long career in our department means that we will be in good hands with him in the leadership position. Don't forget that the Hahn Horticulture Garden Gala is Saturday June 10. It is the best garden party of the year so please come celebrate horticulture with us. All proceeds from the Gala go toward helping keep the Hahn Horticulture Garden a wonderful asset for students, the VT community, and friends everywhere. See <http://www.hort.vt.edu/hhg/> for more information. I hope that you enjoy this edition of our newsletter. Please pass it on!



— Roger



Students in Roger's
Plant Propagation class.

Congratulations to our 2017 Graduates!

Environmental Horticulture

Timothy Bell
Timothy Bryant
Jonathan Buonomo
Yisel Carcamo
William Herbert
Wonjae Kim
Mikaela Larson
Clay Matthews
Jacob Murphey
Aaron Piselli
Micah Smalley
Lucas Walton
Laura Yuhase

Landscape Contracting

Madeline Pequigney
Elliott Roberson

Undergraduate Honors

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
Outstanding Horticulture Student

Laura Yuhase

Outstanding American Society for Horticultural Science Scholar

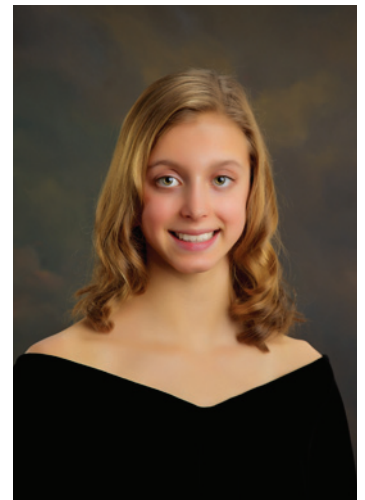
Ella Robyn Reeves (see below)

American Society for Horticultural Science Scholars

Timothy Samuel Bell
Christian Scott Collins
Laura Elizabeth Coggan
Casey Lynn Hoff
Elliott Ray Roberson
William Robert Shelburne
Laura Lynn Stange



Ella J. Reeves, from Dublin VA, is the Virginia Tech Horticulture Department's Outstanding Scholar. She will earn a B.S. in Horticulture and a B.S. in Biological Science in May 2017 with an overall grade point average of 3.92/4.0. In addition to her exemplary academic work, she has worked in the Virginia Tech Plant Disease Clinic as a diagnostic technician since 2015. Her work includes methodology involving PCR, qPCR, and gel electrophoresis. She also conducted an undergraduate research project focusing on the use of Koch's Postulates on bacterial leaf spot of Dianthus. She is involved in several professional and service organizations; for example, she serves as the chair of the Agriculture in the Classroom Committee of Sigma Alpha Pi Chapter – a Women's Professional Agricultural Sorority, and serves as the student leader for the Ukirk Campus Ministry at Virginia Tech.



Virginia Certified Horticulturists

The following students recently passed the exam to become a Virginia Certified Horticulturist.

The Virginia Certified Horticulturist program is a professional certification administered by the Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association. Congratulations to the new certified horticulturists!

Carly Dove
Brent Hassard
William Herbert
Elliott Roberson
Justice Schlemmer
Micah Smalley
Laura Yuhase



Horticulture Club Plant Sale

The Plant Sale was a huge success- raising money for student travel and scholarships. Joe Mills and Leanne Bell were our Plant Sale Chairs this year and they knocked it out of the park! Lots of preparation goes into the sale- logistics, painting signs, marketing, budgeting, ordering, organizing, and pricing plants, growing plants, and working the sale! It is a great opportunity for our students to learn from real life experience, connect with the community, and make the world a greener place! We are so grateful to all of the Horticulture faculty and staff that gave their time, expertise, and resources make the plant sale a great success.



Preparing sedum teacup plantings before Plant Sale.



A Horticulture Club member rings up a happy customer.



Organizing and pricing plants the evening before Plant Sale.

Outreach

The "Eastern Virginia Cover Crop In-Service Training & Team Building Event" took place at the Eastern Shore AREC at the end of April. Ramon Arancibia presented on his two SSARE projects:

- Integrating rowcovers into sustainable production systems to strengthen the sustainability of specialty crop farmers
- Living soil for a sustainable future: assessing the effect of cover crops on soil microbial community and health



Master Gardener News

Extension Agent Training

The State Master Gardener Coordinator office conducted a one-day training in late March for new Extension agents and coordinators who work with the Extension Master Gardener program locally. Right at 25 agents and coordinators traveled to Charlottesville for the training. The state office generally provides similar training each year to help agents navigate the facets of managing a volunteer program and volunteers. Each year the topics are unique for the most part. This year John gave an overview and update from the state office, Riley presented on the challenges of recruiting, marketing, and advertising for local programs, and Dave talked about working together even when differences clash. The state office also brought in Jeremy Johnson, the state volunteer extension specialist from Blacksburg to talk about volunteer screenings. This gives a small glimpse into how the State Master Gardener Coordinator office supports faculty and staff all across the state.



Continuing Education Program

The State Master Gardener Coordinator's Office offered a continuing education program Extension Master Gardeners from all around Virginia gathered in Rapidan, VA at Battlefield Farms for a day of Education on March 28th, 2017. Cole Burrell, Bill Miller, Travis Higginbotham and Peter Kok came out to talk to the attendees about bulbs and greenhouse production!

Topics covered included Cole Burrell covering both: Bulbs and Corms and Tubers, Oh My! and a second breakout session about Native American Bulbs.

Travis Higginbotham discussed how BioControls are revolutionizing pest management to satisfy environmental concerns and Bill Miller covered commercial propagation in the greenhouse for attendees. Finally, Peter Kok covered the history of the bulb production industry, starting hundreds of years ago to the present state of the industry. Extension Master Gardeners were also asked to rate and rank varieties of flowering bulbs and retail displays as part of a market research program at Battlefield Farms.

It was a great day and a gardeners dream to be surrounded by the beautiful bulbs Battlefield farms is producing! Special "Thank You" to Battlefield Farms and the Virginia Master Gardener Association for sponsoring this fun event!



Graduate Student News

Congratulations to Travis Higginbotham, a Horticulture M.S. student for receiving the Altman Family Scholarship! In addition, he is working full time as the Research and Development Manager at Battlefield Farms. He hopes to make the green industry more efficient and environmentally friendly. Read the full story here: <http://tiny.cc/xc3vky>

Horticulture in the News

Strawberry Harvest

Jayesh Samtani is becoming a news celebrity! He was interviewed again about the upcoming strawberry season by Farm Bureau Virginia. In Virginia Beach, they started picking the strawberries almost 3 weeks early this year! Read the entire story here: <http://tiny.cc/pk3vky>

Honeybee Health

Mark Williams was featured on two Pulse of the Planet programs for his research on honeybee's gut bacteria. Listen to the stories (or read the transcripts) here: <http://tiny.cc/qx3vky> and <http://tiny.cc/803vky>

Grants

Jayesh Samtani has been awarded \$5,410 by the Virginia Agricultural Council for the proposal titled, "Evaluating nutrient supplements to improve strawberry fruit yield and quality".



Barbara Leshyn took her Floral Design 2 Class to TFS Wholesale in Roanoke.



Mark Williams and his son, Béla Williams marching for Science in Washington, D.C.

Publications

Laimbeer, FPE, SH Holt, M Makris, MA Hardigan, C Robin Buell, RE Veilleux. 2017. Protoplast isolation prior to flow cytometry reveals clear patterns of endoreduplication in potato tubers, related species, and some starchy root crops. *Plant Methods* 13:27.

Hahn Horticulture Garden News

- The 13th annual Garden Gala at the Hahn! June 10, 2017 5:30 to 9pm
- Learn at Lunch at the Hahn Pavilion- FREE! May 3 12-1pm 1:30 Body-friendly Gardening Techniques with Carol Beliveau
- Simply Elemental has extended its Artist Proposal Deadline to May 15, 2017!

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.