

Department of Horticulture

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November 2010

November has been a very busy and exciting time around Saunders Hall. This is always a special time around the department as we rush to finish semester projects and look forward to our extended Holiday break and the upcoming New Year. We are still in the midst of our search for our open Assistant Professor Rhizosphere Biology and Plant-Microbe Interaction (Blacksburg Campus), Assistant Professor of Fruit Crops (Winchester campus), and Assistant Professor of Nursery Crops (Hampton Roads campus) faculty positions. These positions represent strategic hires to replace recent faculty losses due to retirement and attrition. In addition to these Horticulture faculty positions and positions in other departments, the college is currently interviewing for the open Director and Associate Dean for Extension position. We hope to have all of these positions filled within the next few months. Please be sure to check out the upcoming events at the Hahn Horticulture Garden by going to the department home page and following the electronic footpath to the garden. As always, we would love to hear updates on our alumni and other friends. Enjoy! With kind regards, *Roger*

Horticulture Club Update - by Laura Shields, club Secretary

Fall Activities have included:

- 1) CALS Picnic - showcasing the activities of the club
- 2) Mum Sale at CALS Homecoming - Selling Football Mums
- 3) Stream Bed Clean-up and Outdoor Classroom building for Harding Avenue Elementary School
- 4) Running the activities at the Harding Avenue Elementary School Green Club.
- 5) Future Activities - Spring Plant Sale, Adopt-a-highway, visiting commercial landscaping companies and commercial greenhouses.

The last event held by the Horticulture Club before Thanksgiving break was our annual Thanksgiving dinner, held at the Peggy Lee Hahn Garden Pavilion. All of the club members came together at this event to prepare a feast that everyone enjoyed.

Indoor Plants Class update - Stephanie Huckestein -Class Instructor

The Indoor Plants class recently participated in 2-day service-learning project where students worked with the Adult Day Services by teaching elders about growing plants from seed. Students also shared herbs grown in class and taught cultural and cooking information. They also helped pot up the herbs to take home. The elders and the students really enjoyed the interaction! Great fun!

Horticulturists in the news

Greg Welbaum recently participated in the inaugural USA Science and Engineering Festival in Washington DC for K through 12 students. The non-profit USA Science & Engineering Festival's mission was to produce the most compelling, exciting, educational and entertaining science gathering in the United States. The event was very well attended and is described at:

<http://www.usasciencefestival.org/>.



Opposing teams know when they see **Brian Saunders** (B.S. Horticulture 2010) in this position that a long ball is on the way! Brian has had an incredible year as starting punter for the Hokies, and he is a big part of our undefeated ACC season. In the regular season, Brian has averaged 44.4 yards per punt and has kicked them as long as 66 yards! Many of you know Brian from class. He completed his Horticulture degree this past spring in Landscape Contracting. Brian is from Roseland, VA in Nelson County.



Recent Grants

Bingyu Zhao and collaborators Brett Tyler (VBI), Stephen Marek and Carla Garzon (Oklahoma State University), and Bing Yang (Iowa State University) were recently awarded \$1M from the National Institute for Food and Agriculture for their 5-year project titled "Management of the Switchgrass Rust Disease by Deploying Host Resistant Genes and Monitoring the Dynamics of Pathogen Populations".

Eric Beers and collaborators Andrew Groover (US Forest Service) and Vladimir Filkov (UC Davis, Dept. of Computer Sci.) were recently awarded funding from USDA's Agriculture and Food Research Initiative for their project titled "Regulatory Networks Controlling Hormone Signaling During Woody Growth of Forest Trees". Eric's portion (\$20,000) will go toward graduate student support.