

Department of Horticulture

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Roger Harris, Department Head

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Greetings everyone! Although it is the end of February and still winter in Blacksburg, spring is showing itself with snow drops and crocus flowers about. The woody plants must be not far behind since I noticed that the *Parrotia* tree in my front yard was in full flower this morning. Meanwhile... hardwood cuttings are rooting in the greenhouse and students are getting ready for their trip to PLANET at Auburn University (see details below). Alumni, we would love to hear what you are up to. Please e-mail me (rharris@vt.edu) with an update that you would like to share in our annual newsletter, "Seeds". One way to stay connected with VT is through the university [You Tube](#) channel. Please visit the [Horticulture](#) Department web site often for special departmental features. Enjoy! With kind regards, *Reget*

It's a girl! Jerzy Nowak and Stefanie Hofer announce the birth of their daughter, Leokadia. According to Jerzy it is never too early to beginning a life of loving plants! The picture on the right captures the first lesson. Congratulations Steffi and Jerzy!



More vines are needed! Virginia Secretary of Agriculture Todd Haymore recently shared his outlook on wine grapes at the Virginia Vineyards Association technical meeting and trade show at the Omni Charlottesville Hotel. "We're going to continue to keep the Virginia wine industry and Virginia grapes in the public eye as best we possibly can," Haymore told the group. In the last three years, Haymore said the state has averaged about 8 percent growth in wine sales but there hasn't been a corresponding increase in the number of acres under vine. About 3,000 acres are under vine in Virginia. "We've got to put more grapes — Virginia-grown grapes — into the process of being utilized for winemaking," Haymore said after his formal remarks. "The growth in sales just isn't catching up to the growth in planting ... so we've got to facilitate that. From the vineyards side, that's the most important thing we can continue advocating for."

Congratulations to the recipients of awards from the 2013 CALS Integrated Internal Competitive Grants Program! Principal Investigator, grant title, and amount of award are below.

Dave Close - "School & Community Gardening: Extension Agent In-Service Training" - \$14,000

Mark Williams - "Development of a "Smart Field" and Autonomous Vehicles Technology Platform for Micro-level Management of Agricultural Inputs" - \$29,000

Bingyu Zhao - "Comparative Characterization of a Bacterial Zeta Toxin that is Conserved in Animal and Plant Pathogens" - \$39,000

Susan Clark - "Building Capacity for an Agrarian Living Learning Community" - \$9,800

Laurie Fox - "Urban Water Quality & Stormwater Management Practices" - \$23,000



The Virginia Tech floral design program has teamed up with VT Union and is providing flowers for various events the VT Union brings to Burruss Hall. In December students from floral design program made arrangements that decorated Burruss Hall for the Moscow Ballet's Great Russian Nutcracker. This past weekend students made the designs for the dressing rooms of Steve Martin and the Steep Canyon Rangers. The students chose a fishing theme because of the band's name and because one of the musicians teaches fly-fishing. They also designed a large centerpiece for the entrance of Burruss Hall. Partnering with the VT Union gives students the opportunity to design beyond the classroom.



This fall twelve Horticulture and Agricultural Technology students participated in a special study, one credit class called *Career Practicum*. The class gave the students opportunities to learn skills that will help in their job searches and prepare them for what they may experience at PLANET. Students built irrigation systems, learned to drive a skid steer loader and a zero turn mower and installed a landscape design. Arthur Cox, owner of Indian Creek Hardscaping, brought his equipment to campus and taught the class how to install a hardscape. One of our students showed promise in laying pavers and she was offered a job on the spot! The class is held at the Urban Horticulture Center and taught by **Barbara Kraft** and **John James**. The center provides the outdoor and classroom space needed for this type of class. We are hoping to continue the class this fall and welcome guest speakers and we are always in the need for materials and equipment for demonstration purposes.



Steve Steve Grigg, VNLA President, presents Holly Scoggins with the VNLA Professional of the Year Award

Professional of the Year! Holly Scoggins was recognized as "Professional of the Year" by the Virginia Nursery and Landscape Assoc. at their annual meeting in Baltimore this past January. According to Steve Grigg, VNLA president, "Her work has provided a showcase for the Industry and provided a living classroom. Her work has made the general public, plus others in the academic world, aware of the importance and economic impact of the green industry." Congratulations Holly!

PLANET is upon us! In the middle of mid-term week VT Horticulture students are preparing for another tough event, the 2013 PLANET competition at Auburn University in Alabama. Robert McDuffie, Holly Scoggins, Barbara Leshyn, Tom Martin and John James are the faculty leaders for this year's trip. Robert and Holly doing all the prep work in getting us there and Barbara, Tom and John traveling with the group of twenty four to Alabama. Last year Virginia Tech placed in the top ten. We are hoping to keep the winning tradition at Auburn University this weekend. The picture below is the team from last year's event in Manhattan, Kansas. These folks placed 7th in the country!



Visit the Hahn Horticulture Garden!

Hens in your Household with Dr. Holly Scoggins.

March 13 12:00-1:00 p.m. A Lunchtime Learning - Free! Meet at the Peggy Lee Hahn Garden Pavilion. No registration required. Parking passes available at Pavilion for Visitors only. F/S must park in designated F/S spaces. Holly shares tips and experiences gained over 10+ years with backyard chickens - the good, the bad, and the gross.

Winter and Spring Gardening Workshops and Seminars

Take advantage of our low admission prices and prepare to be informed, entertained, and inspired! Become a Friend of the Garden and enjoy our member discounts! Visit "Memberships" for membership form and more details. Pre-registration is required for workshops and highly recommended for seminars. Call Stephanie at 540-231-5970 to register by phone or email vtgarden@vt.edu.

Gardening for the Health of It with Stacy Best

Saturday, March 2, 10:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m. Litton Reeves 1060. \$15 Friends of the Garden/\$20 general public. For many people the act of gardening satisfies needs well beyond improving the environment and enjoying a personal source of ornamentals, fruits, herbs and vegetables. Best of all, performing gardening tasks offers countless health benefits. Join Stacy Best, Registered Kinesiotherapist, Master Gardener and Holistic Health Coach, to discuss the health benefits of gardening. Discover the top five nutrient-dense, space-saving, cost-saving and easiest edibles to grow yourself! You will also receive five healthy and delicious recipes, learn how to stay fit in the garden, and have the opportunity to ask your burning gardening, nutrition and fitness questions.

Floral Design Workshop: Faux Garden Baskets with David Pippin

Saturday, March 23, 10:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m Peggy Lee Hahn Garden Pavilion. \$35 Friends of the Garden, \$45 general public. Celebrate Spring! Join Richmond-based floral designer, David Pippin as he shows you how to create a faux garden basket arrangement filled with fresh flowers and foliage. All materials will be provided. Participants should bring their own floral clippers. [Must pre-register; attendance limited to 25]

New Publication:

McAvoy, T.P. and J.H. Freeman, 2013. Yellow nutsedge (*Cyperus esculentus*) control with methyl iodide in combination with totally impermeable film. *Weed Technology* 27:117-122.



In Memoriam

We are sad to report that Susan Garrison (BS '87; MS '90) recently died of an extended illness. Susan was the head horticulturist with the town of Blacksburg for many years. She leaves us with a strong and lasting horticulture legacy by turning the town entrances into a welcoming riot of color. Susan spread horticulture throughout Blacksburg with hanging baskets and the planting of many trees.