

# Department of Horticulture

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## January 2010

We welcome a new decade of Horticulture at Virginia Tech this month! Our department was first organized in 1892, so we celebrate 118 years. All faculty, staff, and graduate students were given a nice fleece  $\frac{1}{4}$  zip pullover with the Hokie Bird logo and VT Horticulture embroidered on the front at our holiday gathering in December. Many alumni have asked about getting one so we are happy to offer a limited quantity at cost. They are reported to be very comfortable and surprisingly warm! Please send us your size and a check for \$40 made out to the Virginia Tech Foundation (address to my attention, dept address on header) and we will mail one if you would like to be among the well dressed! These run a little large so please take that into consideration. See pictures below. As always, we would appreciate e-mail updates from our alumni and friends. These will be posted in our spring edition of *Seeds*.

We are excited about the new Landscape Contracting and Environmental Horticulture Majors that I mentioned last month. We are currently submitting proposals for several new classes as part of the new majors: Landscape Contracting, Viticulture (on line), Small Fruits (on line), Organic Vegetable Production and Lab (I and II), and Foodsheds and Sustainability. We hope to have the majors and new classes in place for students who will be graduating in 2012. With kind regards, *Reget*



Welcome new graduate students! **Katie England** (PhD - advisor **Alex Niemiera**), **Shuchi Wu** (PhD - Advisor **Bingyu Zhao**), **Jared Carter** (MS - Advisor **Richard Veilleux**), and **Rui Xia** (PhD - Advisor **Roncai Yuan**).

**Rebecca Dabney**, president of the Horticulture Club, reports that the club recently went to the Harding Avenue Elementary school in Blacksburg for a meeting of the Green Club. Hort club members talked to the kids about how trees differ and conducted an id workshop.

**Lily Mahon** is a new member of Greg Welbaum's lab. She is a Junior Biology major and is screening cantaloupe genotypes for resistance to watermelon fruit blotch.

**Greg Welbaum** is organizing a symposium entitled "Molecular Profiling of Microbial Communities Associated with Seeds" for the 28th International Horticulture Congress (IHC), Lisbon, Portugal, 22-27 August, 2010.

([http://www.ihc2010.org/seminars.asp?page=sm12\\_seed\\_microbiology](http://www.ihc2010.org/seminars.asp?page=sm12_seed_microbiology))

The Virginia Tech chapter of Sigma Xi, the scientific society, is accepting nominations for new membership. Membership nomination deadline is March 1, 2010. New members from last fall and this spring will be inducted at a ceremony and banquet on Tuesday evening April 6. [http://www.sigmaxi.org/chapters/web/index.php?chapter\\_id=139](http://www.sigmaxi.org/chapters/web/index.php?chapter_id=139)

**Dave Close** and Francis Reilly have a new book coming out in February titled: *Smart Yard Care: Big Returns from Small Investments in Stewardship*. The book targets homeowners in the wildland/urban interface and incorporates sustainable landscaping principles (reducing, reusing, and recycling yardwaste) with firewise landscaping practices. This is based on work done in the past by **Diane Relf** where master composter concepts were merged with firewise principles.

**Joyce Latimer** and **John Freeborn** recently received \$15,869 in funding to evaluate new greenhouse heater technology from Proto-Technics, an enterprise located in Orange, VA. Joyce recently attended the annual meeting of the Virginia Association of Agriculture Extension Agents at the Holiday Lake 4-H camp.

If you have not visited the Hahn Horticulture Garden recently you are in for a treat because there have been many marvelous changes. The garden site was used as a test site for new plant cultivars until the late 1980's, when we started developing the site as a horticulture garden. See the photo from the 1960's at the end of the newsletter! There is now plenty of activity all year long now. See the schedule for February below.

#### **Hahn Horticulture Garden Events for February:**

Find all this and more on-line at [www.hort.vt.edu/hhg](http://www.hort.vt.edu/hhg) or email [vtgarden@vt.edu](mailto:vtgarden@vt.edu)

- Free - Wed Garden Walks and Talks; Selected Weds at noon  
Wed, Feb 10 - **Holly Scoggins** - Tropical Plants In Situ: From Palm Trees to Passion Flowers. Take a lunchtime trip to the tropics!
- Winter Seminar Series: Register by calling **Stephanie Huckestein** at 231-5970 or get registration form on line at [www.hort.vt.edu/hhg](http://www.hort.vt.edu/hhg)
- Friends of the Garden Seminar: Remarkable Trees of Virginia with Jeff Kirwan  
Thurs, Febr 4, 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., Fralin Auditorium; Free for current Friends of the Garden members; general public \$20. Virginia Tech forestry professor and 4-H extension specialist, Jeff Kirwan, will speak about his four-year search for Virginia's most remarkable trees, and his new book "Remarkable Trees of Virginia" with co-author NancyRoss Hugo that features 100 of the oldest, largest, most beautiful and historic trees
- The Sustainable Garden: Magic or Myth? with C. Colston Burrell. Feb 18, 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., Fralin Auditorium, \$15 Friends of the Garden members/\$20 general

Join *Growing Power's* Will Allen and Lynchburg Grows for a 1 ½ day hands-on workshop on sustainable agriculture and creating local food systems at Lynchburg Grows, 1339 Englewood Street, Lynchburg VA 24501 March 5-6. Topics Include: Community Project Design, Composting, Vermiculture, Aquaponics, Living Biological Growing Systems. Cost: \$250.00. Contact **Scott Lowman** at [scottlowman@vt.edu](mailto:scottlowman@vt.edu) for agenda and information.

**Joyce Latimer** has been awarded the Southeast Color Connection's (Southeast Greenhouse Conference) 2010 Horticulture Initiative Award. This award is given annually to recognize an individual who has made a major contribution to the floriculture industry. As the award letter states, because "you are a leader in the horticulture industry and have touched many lives, the board of directors wants to recognize and thank you for your service."

**Alan McDaniel** received a Center for Instructional Development and Education Research (CIDER) grant for "Videography to enhance gains of floral design student service-learning in community engagement."

The Garden Professor Blog, of which **Holly Scoggins** is a major participant (<https://sharepoint.cahnrs.wsu.edu/blogs/urbanhort/default.aspx>) was recently the main thread on the CALS facebook page. The blog is getting rave reviews! Not a friend of CALS facebook? Go to <http://www.facebook.com/vtagricultureandlifesciences> and become one!

Horticulture professors **Richard Veilleux** and **Vladimir Shulaev**, along with graduate students **Juan Ruiz**, **Sarah Holt** and **Nan Lu** attended the Plant and Animal Genome conference in San Diego, January 9-13, where they presented their work on strawberry genomics. The group is working on the diploid strawberry, *Fragaria vesca*, as a model fruit crop. Seedlings of this species can flower and fruit in less than 4 months in a growth chamber, allowing multiple generation per year. Discoveries regarding gene functions in *F. vesca* may be directly applicable to improvement of other rosaceous fruit with unwieldy growth habits and life cycles.

**Susan Day** was recently awarded a grant by the Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association (VNLA) to help establish a nursery and landscape horticulture undergraduate research internship at the Urban Horticulture Center.

**Bonnie Appleton** (Preventing Tree Root Desiccation and Damage during Bare Root Handling) and **Alex Niemiera** (Effect of pine tree substrate storage and lime addition on pH and plant growth) were also awarded VNLA grants.

#### **Recent Publications:**

Han, C-Y, **Welbaum, G.**, and, C-L Long. 2010. Seed dormancy and germination of *Michelia yunnanensis* (Magnoliaceae). *Scientia Horticulturae* 124 (2010) 83-87.

**Mei, C.** and **B.Flinn**. 2010. The use of beneficial microbial endophytes for plant biomass and stress tolerance improvement. *Recent Patents on Biotechnology* 4:81-95.





Site of the Hahn Horticulture Gardens in the 1960's

