

# Department of Horticulture

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## October 2011

The beginning of November finds us with a last burst of great fall color around Blacksburg. Students are busy getting "down to business" with their classes as everyone realizes that fall semester will soon give way to finals and the holidays. There actually is life between the fall football games! We will merge our November and December e-newsletters so look for that mailing after classes let out in December. As always, we would love to hear updates on our alumni and other friends. Alumni - stay connected with VT on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/) and visit the [Horticulture](http://www.hort.vt.edu/) Department web site often for special departmental features. Enjoy! With kind regards, *Roger*

**Susan Day** was recently featured in the *Arborist News* under "Profiles in Arboriculture". Susan was the recipient of the 2010 International Society of Arboriculture's Early-Career Scientist Award. According To the article, "Dr. Susan Day, spotlights a dedicated individual who is providing substantive inquiry and discussion into urban soil rehabilitation, stormwater management, canopy development, and other related subjects. Day has a wealth of ideas for solving problems in urban design, particularly after having spent considerable time living (and researching) in highly urbanized areas, such as Chicago, Illinois."



**Lisa Lipsey, Velva Groover** and **Alex Niemiera** recently conducted a Plant Breeding Workshop at the Merrifield Garden Center in Gainesville VA. The workshop is part of the Beautiful Gardens Grow with Confidence® plant introduction program of the Virginia Landscape and Nursery Association. See <http://www.beautifulgardens.org/> for more information on Beautiful Gardens.

**Jim Owen** attended the International Symposium on Growing Media, Composting and Substrate Analysis in Barcelona Spain. Ted Bilderback (NC State U.) presented the research group's invited paper titled "Strategies for Developing Sustainable Substrates in Nursery Crops" to over 100 attendees from 30 countries.

**Jim Owen** and **JB Snelson** attended the Southern Region International Plant Propagator's Society meeting in Valdosta, GA.

Virginia Tech celebrated the life of our first department head, William Bradford Alwood, by dedicating the bur oak he planted sometime around 1895. The Alwood Oak proudly stands on the edge of the drill field in front of Burruss Hall. Professor Alwood is also revered as an applied entomologist, and Dr. Mike Weaver from VT's Entomology department was the driving force behind the dedication. Teams of arborists from the Mid-Atlantic Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture (MAC-ISA) made major contributions by installing a lightning prevention system on the tree and providing pruning and other maintenance, using their own personal equipment and at their own expense. Dr. Eric Wiseman and his classes have provided much health care as part of the College of Natural Resources and Environment's Urban Forestry major to this magnificent tree over the years. The entire project was undertaken with a genuine *ut prosim* attitude by all that were involved. The tree stands as an icon of our department. It was planted just after our birth, and it is still strong and growing. Thank you Dr. Weaver, the MAC-ISA, Dr. Wiseman, and VT Urban Forestry students!



Left: Associate Dean Saied Mostaghimi, Dean Alan Grant, and Professor Mike Weaver speak with an Alwood family member (facing away). Center: Family and friends gather under the oak prior to the dedication. Right: MAC-ISA members Ed Milhous and Keith Cline under the canopy of the Alwood Oak.

#### Recent Publications:

**Hong Zhu, Chris D. Dardick, Eric P. Beers, Ann M Callanhan, Rui Xia and Rongcai Yuan.** 2011. Transcriptomics of shading-induced and NAA-induced abscission in apple (*Malus domestica*) reveals a shared pathway involving reduced photosynthesis, alterations in carbohydrate transport and signaling and hormone crosstalk. *BMC Plant Biology* 11:138doi:10.1186/1471-2229-11-138.

**H. Earl Petzold, Mingzhe Zhao and Eric P. Beers.** 2011. Expression and function of proteases in vascular tissues. *Physiologia Plantarum* PMID 22022801. (a special issue dedicated to papers from the 1<sup>st</sup> international plant protease conference in Hemavan, Sweden; Eric Beers was the keynote speaker).

**K. Da, J. Nowak and B. Flinn.** 2011. Potato cytosine methylation and gene expression changes induced by a beneficial bacterial endophyte, *Burkholderia phytofirmans* strain PsJN. *Plant Physiology and Biochemistry* 50:24-34.

**James E. Altland, James S. Owen, and Magdalena Z. Gabriel.** 2011. Influence of pumice and plant roots on substrate physical properties over time. *HortTechnology* 21(5): 554-557.

Ryan Contreras and **Jim Owen.** 2011. The economy of water. *Digger Farwest Edition*. August 139-144.

Horticulture students in **Susan Day's** Landscape Establishment and Maintenance (HORT 3644) class installed over 80 *Hosta sieboldiana* 'Elegans' and *Hemerocallis* 'Little Business' and prepared an area for kindergarten students to plant cool-season vegetables in the spring at a local elementary school. All plants were generously donated by Jim Snyder at Riverbend Nursery in Riner, Virginia. This class is a university service-learning course and partners with Gilbert Linkous Elementary School. Previous year's students conduct detailed site assessments and propose landscape design and renovation projects, and selected projects are installed by the class the following year. This year's planting was designed by **Katie Rines**, **Amanda Rexrode**, and **Andrew Pound**. Thanks to **Andrew Kellinger**, **Alyssa Michnick**, and **Sarah Morgan** for serving as crew foremen. The weather was great, the pH is adjusted, and roots are growing!

### Landscape Establishment Class Puts a New Face on Kindergarten Play Area

Sophomore horticulture student **Kaitlyn Hunter** prepares a landscape bed at Gilbert Linkous Elementary School in Blacksburg

