

Department of Horticulture

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Roger Harris, Department Head

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Greetings everyone! We are holding on to the promise of spring here on campus. So far it has just been a promise, but I know that there are some flowers under the snow! Meanwhile, we are still busy interviewing for the Horticultural Crops Research and Extension Specialist position at the Eastern Shore AREC in Painter and the Translational Genomics of Horticultural Crops Research and Teaching Specialist position to be based at the Blacksburg campus. I should be able to report some good news next month. The Hort Hokies have just returned from the 2014 PLANET student competition and field day in Ft. Collins, CO (see story below). I am very thankful to those who donated money to support our students. We couldn't do it without you! - With kind regards, *Roger*

Alumni, please e-mail me (rharris@vt.edu) with an update that you would like to share in our annual newsletter, *Seeds*. The current edition of *Seeds* is now posted on our website. Please visit the [Horticulture](http://www.hort.vt.edu) Department web site often for former *Seeds* editions and special departmental features. It is very helpful for us to know where our alumni have landed and how their careers have progressed. Please help by going to <http://www.alumni.vt.edu/gateway/index.html> to enter your data for us. We would be most grateful! One good way to stay connected with VT is through the university [You Tube](#) channel. Be a life-time Hokie by staying in touch with the [CALS alumni association](#). Check out the current issue of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences "[Innovations](#)" newsletter. We are now on Facebook! Please "like" us and check out news, links to scholarships, new course announcements and all sorts of other departmental information at <https://www.facebook.com/VirginiaTechHorticulture> -

Come Over to the Green Side!

Sarah Gugercin has taken the message on the road. She was recently at the FFA Agriculture Career Fair in Abingdon. Our department was one of the 5 CALS departments present at the fair which had about 150 high school juniors and seniors visit throughout the day. She will be on the road again next month, this time to Maryland to visit a high school.



Mara Grossman, Erika Lyons and Margaret Aiken recently attended the e-GRO diagnostic tour in Charlotte. The tour was composed of a consortium of graduate students, professors and extension specialists from VT, NCSU, MSU, UGA, Cornell, UNH, and Purdue who toured 7 greenhouses in the Charlotte area. The group identified and diagnosed nutrition issues, diseases, insect damage and abiotic issues within the greenhouses and then reported back to the growers.



Hokies Rock the Rockies!

Twenty-five students from Virginia Tech Horticulture and Agriculture Technology traveled to Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colorado recently to compete in the 38th Annual PLANET Student Career Days competition. The team was led by **Barbara Leshyn, Tom Martin and John James**. Horticulture and Ag Tech students competed against 720 students from 65 different schools. Virginia Tech placed 13th as a team with many students placing in the top ten of their events. Matt Cox and Karrin Larson were both recipients of \$1000 dollar scholarships.

4 th Place	Sales Presentation	Karrin Larson
5 th Place	Turf and Weed Id.	Christa Bush
7 th Place	Landscape Maintenance Operations	Jake Heuple; Jeffery Patch
7 th Place	Irrigation Design	Michael Isaacman
7 th Place	Plant Problem Diagnosis	Izak Khani
7 th Place	Construction Cost Estimating	Matt Cox
7 th Place	Interior Landscape Design	Ned Harm
7 th Place	Compact Excavator Operations	Bryan Sours
7 th Place	3D Exterior Landscape Design	Chris Gore
9 th Place	Leadership	Lindsay Day
10 th Place	Hardscape Installation	Matt Cox; James Ulmer

After the competition the students celebrated on the ski slopes and went hiking in the Colorado Rockies. Congratulations to a great group of hard working students! Next year the event is being held at North Carolina State University. See Photos on the next page.

PLANET 2014 - Ft. Collins, CO



Jayesh Samtani and his collaborators at the Southern Piedmont AREC have received \$27,770 from the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services for their project "**Determining the Efficacy and Economics of Soil Solarization and Mustard Products for Soilborne Pest Control in Virginia Annual Plastics Strawberry Production**".

"**Strawberry Virus Detection, Identification, Best Management Practice Recommendations and Information Dissemination**", a poster by **Jayesh Samtani** and several collaborators was recently awarded third prize in poster competition in Agriculture and Natural Resources Category at the Virginia Cooperative Extension conference held in Blacksburg.

VCE is celebrating a "Volunteer of the Month" as part of the Centennial Celebration for Extension this year. In both January and February the Volunteers of the Month were Extension Master Gardeners, awards we are quite proud of. Statewide, VCE has almost 27,000 volunteers annually, and for the first two to be MGs is quite the honor! Volunteer of the month for January was Elizabeth Overton (left photo) and volunteer of the month for February was Carolyn Wilson (right photo).



Elizabeth Overton has been a Virginia Cooperative Extension volunteer for more than 25 years.



Carolyn Wilson, of Mount Jackson, Va., spends time rapping about veggies with elementary school children during the summer 4-H program.

Shuchi Wu recently won first place in the graduate student competition for his talk titled "**A transcription factor AIN2 manipulates plant immunity by regulating the plant stomatal aperture size**" at the American Phytopathological Society - Potomac Division meeting in Annapolis. Congratulations Shuchi!

Hort Club Spring Plant Sale is April 24-26, Thursday - Saturday, 8:00 to 6:00 each day. Held at the greenhouse and Hahn Garden complex on campus (Washington St.). The highlight of every spring for the NRV and beyond. Annuals, perennials, hanging baskets, trees, shrubs, and more. Fabulous barbecue available from the AgEcon/NAMA Club. Proceeds support student scholarships and programs! Want more Plant Sale specifics? E-mail the students at plantsale@vt.edu.

Plant Sale Preview! - April 23, Wednesday, 12:00 to 1:00 p.m. (as part of the Learn at Lunch Wednesday series at the Hahn). How about a sneak peek at some fabulous plants?! A show-and-tell in the Garden Pavilion - see what our students have been growing, as well as other drool-worthy perennials, trees and shrubs brought in from top-notch Virginia nursery growers for your shopping pleasure. NO SALES, NO HOLDS on Wednesday! (You're going to have to come back Thursday.)

Mike Hildebrand is the recipient of the "Alumni of the Year" award for our department! Mike earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Horticulture in 1974. His horticulture concentration was Ornamental Horticulture and Landscape Design. However, his interest in horticulture was cultivated in advance of attending Virginia Tech. While in high school, and even during his college years, he worked at DeHaven Nursery in his home town of Winchester Virginia. After graduating from Virginia Tech, he worked for Lairds Nursery in Richmond as a landscape foreman; Mike quickly moved



up to the landscape designer and salesman positions. In 1983 he founded James River Nurseries with his business partner Al Jones in Hanover County. Several years later, Mike co-founded James River Irrigation and James River Grounds Management. These are premier landscape-related companies that are highly regarded in the trade. Mike takes pride in the fact that these companies have employed and still employs many Virginia Tech Horticulture and Landscape Architecture graduates. Mike's other business ventures include Glen Allen Nurseries and James River Cellars. Mike's contributions to the landscape industry go well beyond his business; he is involved in industry organizations such as the Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association, the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET), and Agriculture in the Classroom. Mike is a true Hokie. He is an avid supporter of the Virginia Tech Horticulture Department and the Hahn Horticulture Garden. He and his wife Susie are members of the Virginia Tech Capital Campaign and members of the Agricultural and Life Sciences Steering Committee. The Department of Horticulture is very proud of Mike's professional and personal achievements. His generous support of the Department of Horticulture and Virginia Tech are very much appreciated. On a personal note, Mike has been married to his wife Susie for 36 years; she's a graduate of the University of Virginia but Mike tells us that their enduring love overcomes any intercollegiate rivalry! Mike has two sons who are both employed at James River Nurseries. Brian is a Radford University graduate with a Business degree and Dan is a Virginia Tech graduate who upheld his Dad's tradition and earned a B.S. in Horticulture in 2007. Mike's hobbies include coaching/attending sports activities; he has a special interest in Virginia Tech athletics and attends all the events that his schedule will allow.

Phil Wadl is the recipient of the "Recent Alumni of the Year" award for our department! Phil received his B.S. and M.S. in our department in 2003 and 2005, respectively. After his earning his Ph.D. in 2009, he has been employed as an Assistant Research Professor in the Department of Entomology and Plant Pathology at The University of Tennessee. The goal of his current work is to develop molecular markers to



study genetic diversity and population genetics of plant pathogens and ornamental plants. This genetic work will allow the development of new ornamental crops with greater adaptability, disease resistance, and commercial potential. Since taking this research position, as well as in his graduate student years, he has been a very productive scientist. Evidence of his productivity is that in the last seven years Phil has 1) published 35 peer-reviewed journal publications and 13 abstract/conference proceedings, 2) co-authored four book chapters, 3) been awarded a patent (co-ownership) for a novel form of dogwood, and 4) obtained \$418,000 in grants. His research and publishing efforts are highly regarded in the scientific realm. In 2013 he was senior author on a publication that won the 2013 American Society of Horticultural Science Publication Award. He is very active in mentoring graduate students and laboratory assistants. Thus, in a very few years Phil has distinguished himself as a top notch member of the scientific community. We in the Horticulture Department are very proud of his accomplishments!

Jude Moon is the winner of the Howard & Betsy Massey Graduate Scholarship in International Horticulture for \$1,500 to support her trip to present her research at a conference in Korea. Congratulations Jude!

Andy Alden of the VT Transportation Institute and **Greg Welbaum**, pictured on the right at the VT Smart Road, recently received a grant to evaluate saline biochar as a road deicing material for applied salt recycling.



The article 'Postharvest transfer and survival of *Salmonella enterica* serotype enteritidis on living lettuce' by J.A. Waitt, D.D. Kuhn, **G.E. Welbaum**, and M.A. Ponder, 2014. Letters in Applied Microbiology 58, 95-101, received the Editor's Choice Award for the most significant article in the February issue of the journal.