VirginiaTech

Department of Horticulture

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Roger Harris, Department Head

October 2013

Greetings everyone! The usual questions of October were all asked this month. Are the leaves as beautiful as usual? When will the colors peak? When will we get our first frost? There are no easy answers, but it was indeed beautiful - a wonderful time of year in Blacksburg! We will be advertising soon for our newest faculty position, Assistant Professor of Plant Translational Genomics. This position will be predominantly research and based in Latham Hall. We hope to have the position filled by next summer. We are very happy to be welcoming Alex Hessler to our faculty in January as the Director of Sustainable Food Production (see below for more information). 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 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 go to http://www.alumni.vt.edu/gateway/index.html and 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. With kind regards, *Roger*

The Fall Focus Career Fair is back! Due to popular demand, the career fair was recently held in Squires Student Center. This event is the best opportunity for students to connect with industry for internships and employment. We are very happy that VT's Career Services was able to sponsor it after a two-year absence. Students and industry representatives all report that it was a resounding success!

A group of graduate students, faculty, and staff recently toured *Lynchburg Grows* with Horticulture PhD student and *Lynchburg Grows* co-director **Scott Lowman** as their guide. *Lynchburg Grows* is a seven acre urban farm with 40,000 square feet of greenhouses, located in the heart of Lynchburg. Scott shared the mission of how the urban agriculture facility combines growing food with innovation, education and job skill development for folks with disabilities or low incomes. In addition to food crops, *Lynchburg Grows* produces and sells very hardy, heirloom hybrid tea roses that were grown by the original greenhouse operation. For more information about *Lynchburg Grows* see: Spotlight and Lynchburg Grows. Pictured in the photo on the left are (L to R) **Nate Foust-Meyer, Sean Francis, Megan O'Rourke, Susan Clark, and Velva Groover**. Not pictured: **Pris Sears** and **Scott Lowman**.

Holly Scoggins was recently featured on WVTF, Virginia Public Radio, in an interview with Robbie Harris on options for saving and storing tender garden plants when cold weather hits. According to Dr. Scoggins, all is not lost even if you unexpectedly get an early cold snap. After all, "Every frozen tender perennial creates a new gardening opportunity!"

Alex Niemiera was recently awarded a $29,750 grant entitled "Edible Landscape Demonstration Gardens in Virginia" from the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (USDA). Alex will be coordinating the planning and development of edible landscape demonstration gardens at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden (Richmond), Norfolk Botanical Garden, and Green Springs Garden (Alexandria). He will also be conducting a survey to assess the educational impact of these demonstration gardens.

Emily Zhou recently attended the annual meeting of the Mid-Atlantic Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture in Fredericksburg. Her trip as supported by a grant from the society.

Alex Hessler will join the Horticulture faculty as Instructor and Director of Sustainable Food Production in January. Alex is a native of Chapel Hill, NC. He completed his BS degree from the University of Montana in Resource Conservation and finishes his MS in Integrated Plant and Soil Sciences from the Horticulture department at the University of Kentucky this December. The title of his MS thesis is "Influence of Reduced Tillage and Living Mulches on Soil Quality and Weed Community Composition in Organic Bell Pepper Production." This position is a unique partnership between our department and VT's Dining Services. Alex will be directing the "Farm-to-Table" operation where students and dining services employees grow vegetables at VT's Kentland Farm that are served in our dining halls. He will also be teaching field and classroom courses in organic and sustainable vegetable production. Welcome Alex!

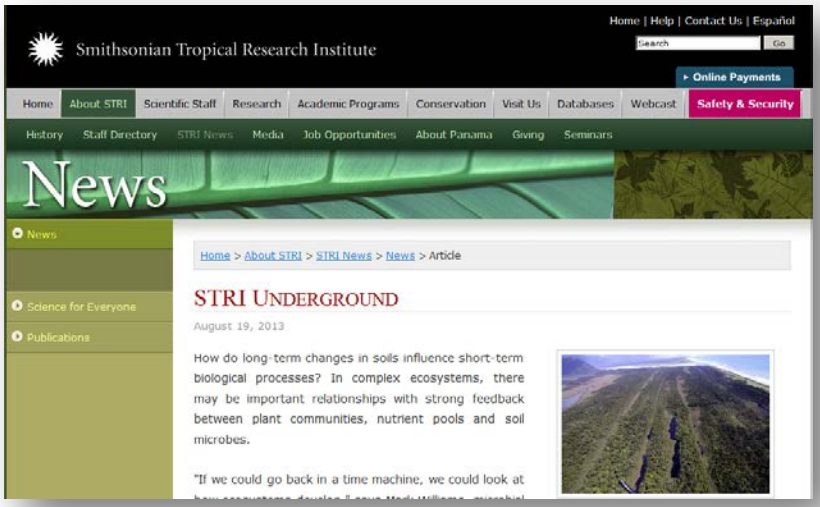
Recent publications:

Bailey, D.R., **J.S. Owen, Jr.,** J. Wagner and J.S. Selker. 2013. In-situ performance and usability of a distributed, wireless sensor network via mesh connectivity at a production container nursery. Applied Engineering in Agriculture 29:779-782.

Contreras, R.N., **J.S. Owen**, Jr. W. Hanna and B. Schwartz. 2013. Evaluation of seven complex *Pennisetum* hybrids for container and landscape performance in the Pacific northwestern United States. HortTechnology 23:525-528.

Yan Chen and **Jayesh B. Samtani**. 2013. Good Genes from Asia – Contributions and Opportunities of Asian Origin Crops to U.S. Horticulture: An Introduction to the Workshop. HortScience 48(9):1072. This manuscript was part of the workshop held at the American Society for Horticultural Science's Annual Conference in Miami, FL. The workshop was sponsored by the Working Group of Asian Horticulture and The Association of Horticulturists of Indian Origin. Jayesh served as Chair for the Association of Horticulturists of Indian Origin and he is Chair-elect for the Working Group of Asian Horticulturists.

Mark Williams' research on ecosystem development and soil biological systems in New Zealand was recently featured on the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute's web site. Check out the full story at [Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute](). The feature was also presented in the VT daily news.



Jim Owen recently conducted a two-day workshop on the importance of Water Quality in Ornamental Crop Production in Virginia Beach. Speakers, in addition to Jim, included **Laurie Fox**, **Joyce Latimer**, and Chuan Hong from VT and out of state speakers John Lea-Cox, Paul Fisher, Rosa Raudales and Diana Cochran. The second day of the program included tours of Bennett's Creek, Lancaster Farms and Herb Aquafarms LLC, with specific attention to water management systems.

Pumpkin Mania!

Pumpkin Mania, a class on fall floral design for Blacksburg residents led by **Barbara Leshyn**, was a huge success. Community members, students and VT faculty all went home with fun and beautiful arrangements.

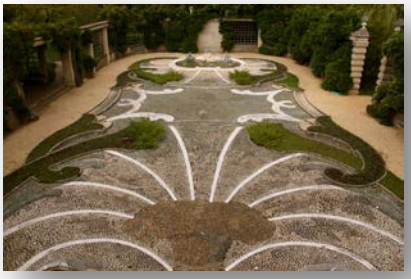
Horticulture Hokies Invade Manhattan! by Robert McDuffie

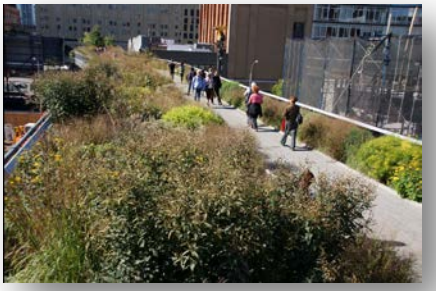
Before sunrise on Friday, September 27, thirty-five horticulture students, faculty and a handful of real people left Blacksburg in a bus and headed north for four days of beautiful gardens, a great landscape company and two full days in the Big Apple. Our first stop appropriately was at Hidden Lane Landscaping in Herndon. The owner, Peter Murray (Hort '82) was on our very first trip north back in 1981. Along with Peter, three other Hidden Lane employees (also Hort Hokies) were on hand to take the group around to four of their projects—one from each designer. They were: Linda Nichols (Hort '80), Tony Orband (Hort '08), Anthony Piselli (Hort '11).

Leaving Hidden Lane we drove to Dumbarton Oaks in Georgetown followed by Homestead Gardens in Davidsonville. Before the long drive to northern New Jersey, we stopped for dinner in Annapolis. Saturday and Sunday were spent in New York City as we saw some of the best horticulture that the city has to offer at The High Line, Brooklyn Botanical Garden, Central Park, Wave Hill, New York Botanic Garden, and a 90-minute cruise in the NYC harbor at sunset.

Our final day was spent outside of Philadelphia at Chanticleer Garden and Longwood Gardens. At Longwood, we met with fellow Hokie, Brian Trader (BS in Hort '00, M.S. PPWS '02, and PhD Hort '06), who shared lunch and information about Longwood's undergraduate program that he is the director of. Before departing for the long bus ride back to Blacksburg, former VT Hort faculty member, Bob Lyons, hosted the group at his newly rebuilt house for a short reception. Bob, who is director of the Longwood Graduate Program in Public Horticulture, shared valuable information to the students about the program he heads.

If interested, there are more pictures posted online from the trip. Click here: Pictures





If you have not been to the **Hahn Horticulture Gardens** lately please treat yourself and see what is new. Keep up with all of the exciting new events such as the ones listed below by clicking here: Hahn Horticulture Garden

Lunchtime Learning - Free Wednesday Garden Walks and Talks Held on various Wednesdays (not every Wed.). All start promptly at 12:00 noon and run from 30 minutes to one hour. Meet at the Peggy Lee Hahn Garden Pavilion. No registration required. Parking passes available at Pavilion for Visitors only, or stop at the Visitor's Center on Prices Fork to pick up a pass. F/S must park in designated F/S spaces.

NEXT UP: November 13, 12:00 -1:00 p.m. "Gardening for Wildlife Habitat Enhancement" with Suzie Leslie. Suzie is a Master Naturalist and member of the New River chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society. She'll share strategies for creating bird- and butterfly-riendly environments plus some seasonal tips for autumn and winter gardening. Did we mention she's also a member of the New River Valley Bird Club, Virginia Society of Ornithology, AND the North American Butterfly Association?

Volunteers at the Hahn Horticulture Garden were recently honored with a "Volunteer Appreciation Dinner" at the Peggy Lee Hahn Pavilion with more than 40 attendees. This annual party gives garden faculty and staff (**Holly Scoggins**, **Stephanie Huckestein**, **Paul Chumbley**, and **Lisa Lipsey**) the opportunity to formally thank our wonderful volunteers. These folks have logged many, many hours as they help with garden maintenance (the Monday Night Gang) as well as assisting Stephanie with the Junior Master Gardener Program.

NEW BONNIE APPLETON FUND

In memory of Bonnie Appleton, the Mid-Atlantic Chapter of ISA and Trees Virginia have established an account with the TREE Fund with the intent to endow a fund honoring Bonnie's contributions to the arboriculture industry. Contact Janet Bornancin at 630-369-8300 x 201 to contribute or learn more.

http://www.vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2012/07/073112-cals-appletonmemoriam.html