January 2011

Happy 20011 everyone! I am pleased to report that two of our open faculty positions have been filled. Dr. Mark Williams, currently Assistant Professor in the Plant and Soil Science Department at Mississippi State University has accepted our offer for Assistant Professor of Rhizosphere Biology and Plant-Microbe Interactions on the Blacksburg campus and will join us this June. Dr. Greg Peck, currently a Post-Doctoral Associate in Horticulture and Director of the Nutrient Analysis Laboratory at Cornell University, has accepted our offer of Assistant Professor of Fruit Crops at the Alson H. Smith, Jr. Agriculture Research and Extension Center at Winchester. Dr. Peck will join us in April. We are all excited to have both of these extremely talented scientists join our VT Horticulture family. Our Assistant Professor of Nursery Crops position remains unfilled at the present time. Hopefully I will have good news to report next month. We will report in more detail in our SEEDS newsletter. Speaking of SEEDS, we need more alumni news! Please let us know what you are up to so that we can spread the word. Enjoy this latest edition of our monthly e-newsletter!

With kind regards, Roger

National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) visits the Horticulture Department

The federal government periodically makes a comprehensive review of academic departments and our turn (last done in 2003) was recently up! This involves a self study by the department followed by a several-day review headed by a leader from NIFA and a selected team of Horticulture Professors from around the country. The purpose is to review the various activities of the department and to make suggestions for the future. The team basically affirmed our recent efforts and made very helpful suggestions.

Hort Students to attend PLANET Student Career Days

Student Career Days is an annual three-day competitive event among students enrolled in horticulture programs from colleges and universities across the country. The students have the chance to compete in events that are directly related to the skills necessary for a career in the green industry. The event also offers a Career Fair which gives the students the opportunity to meet prospective employers in the industry and discuss employment opportunities. Planet will be held at Joliet Junior College in Joliet, IL this year, March 17-20, and will be led by Robert McDuffie.
Designing and Building Thermogradient Tables Using LED Grow Lights for Research

Greg Welbaum now designs, builds, and sells next generation thermogradient tables through TASCO, a company in Christiansburg. A thermogradient table is a system designed for any application where there is a need of testing responses over a range of temperatures. Most often these tables are used for seed germination testing over a wide range of temperatures simultaneously and for testing the temperature performance of seed coating materials and treatments at different temperatures.

Looking for Cain Hickey? Best put your waders on! When not studying for a statistics exam, Cain, viticulture MS student from Erie, PA is more than likely wetting a fly in some remote trout stream. He is shown below with a native brown trout near State College, PA.

Chengsong Zhao and Eric Beers recently published some of their research on genes that regulate phloem function. The paper is titled "The Arabidopsis Myb genes MYR1 and MYR2 are redundant negative regulators of flowering time under decreased light intensity". It will appear in The Plant Journal. This work is the result of collaboration between the Beers lab at Virginia Tech and Yuji Kamiya’s Growth Regulation Research Group at the RIKEN Plant Science Center in Japan, and was funded by the U.S. Department of Energy. Check it out at Phloem Function

Barbara Kraft is working with Wake Forest University and Carlos Evia and Manuel Quinones Perez of Virginia Tech to create a mobile electronic tool that will facilitate communication between supervisors and Latino workers. The tool will be designed to give Latino workers resources to communicate hazardous situations regardless of language or culture barriers.

Joyce Latimer recently presented a webinar entitled "Using PGRs to Enhance Branching of Herbaceous Perennial Plugs" as part of the Southeast Nursery and Greenhouse IPM Webinar series hosted by Texas AgriLife Extension (Texas A&M).

Joyce Latimer, Dave Close, John Ignosh (BSE area specialist, Shenandoah Valley VCE) and Lisa Sanderson (Henrico VCE) recently wrapped up a pilot project on recycling plastic garden containers in the Richmond area. The project included four Richmond garden centers over the summer 2010 and was made possible with Extension Master Gardener volunteer support.
Alex Niemiera recently received $10,500 from the Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association to fund his research on pine tree substrate. His proposal title was Urea Hydrolysis in a Pine Tree Substrate.

Upcoming events at the Hahn Horticulture Garden

**Wednesday Garden Talks** - Free! All run 12:00 noon to 1:00 p.m. No registration required. These fun and informative winter "Talks" are all presented indoors at the Peggy Lee Hahn Garden Pavilion.

*February 9, 12:00-1:00 p.m.*
"Palms in Paradise" with Dr. Holly Scoggins, Associate Professor and Garden Director

*February 16, 12:00-1:00 p.m.*
"Invasive Insect Pests Threatening Virginia" with Eric Day of the Entomology Dept.

**Winter 2011 Gardening Workshops and Seminars** 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.

*Saturday, February 12, 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.*
"Gardening Despite Deer" with Paul Westervelt

*Thursday February 24, 6:00-7:30 p.m.* **Virginia Bioinformatics Institute Conference Center** "The Explorer's Garden" with Dan Hinkley (Don’t miss this one!)

For more information or to register, contact Stephanie at vtgarden@vt.edu or 540-231-5970 or visit our website at [http://www.hort.vt.edu/hhg/events](http://www.hort.vt.edu/hhg/events)

Scott Lowman, 2nd year Horticulture PhD students located at The Institute for Sustainable and Renewable Resources (<http://www.isrr.ialr.org/>) at IALR in Danville demonstrates DNA extraction from strawberry to 3rd grade students during Career Day at Rustburg Elementary in Campbell Co., VA.