November-December 2014

The end of 2014 is fast approaching as Fall semester comes to a close at VT. Four of our horticulture majors will be graduating at fall commencement on Friday, Dec. 19. In exit interviews, all four graduating seniors were enthusiastic about their undergraduate programs in Horticulture. And the degree will set each of them on a different life strategy after college, ranging from graduate studies to hiking the Pacific Crest Trail. We are indeed fortunate to have such a diversity of talent in our student population and we are proud to have them represent our department as they continue in their career paths. As we approach the New Year, we look forward to Holly’s new Wintermester course on Greenhouse Management, Barbara’s new spring offering of Floral Design II, and Alex Hessler’s new spring Sustainable Agriculture Practicum course, complementing our usual offering of Horticulture courses for both undergraduate and graduate students. Auré Bombarely is working with his two cohorts in CSES (Song LI) and PPWS (David Haak), all part of last year’s cluster hire in Plant Genomics, to offer our graduate students a new informal course in bioinformatics. The course is expected to evolve into an offering for credit in future years. I have enjoyed serving as department head these past six months and expect Roger will be back in January.

Send-off Party for Holly at the Garden

Volunteers for The Hahn Horticulture Garden hosted a smashing appreciation/send-off party for Holly Scoggins, the Garden’s director for the past 12 years. A wintery evening of story-telling, appreciating Holly’s contributions to the Garden’s development, and acknowledging how her effervescent spirit enhanced mundane tasks such as weeding into something fun and rewarding. Holly in turn recognized the contributions of our volunteers, many of whom have given years of service that included installing thousands of plants, pulling tons of weeds, serving on the Garden Gala Auction committee, helping with the Junior Master Gardener program, and accomplishing countless other tasks. The food and drink were fabulous (including the rummiest rum cake ever), the company the best, and our appreciation of Holly most sincere.
Undergraduate News

Awards and Honors for James Rockwell

Horticulture senior, James Rockwell, continues to shine as one of our undergraduate student standouts. Last summer, he secured a highly-competitive production greenhouse internship at Longwood Gardens, then a Perennial Plant Association Conference Travel Grant to enable his attendance at the 2014 Perennial Plant conference in Cincinnati last July. Recently he was awarded the 2015 GPN/Nexus Intern of the Year Scholarship. As part of this honor, he will have a feature-length profile with photo on the cover of the January 2015 issue of GPN and an expense-paid trip to the AmericanHort Short Course next July in Columbus, Ohio. Finally, James has recently been awarded a “Great Gardens of the World Triad Fellowship.” After graduation, as a Triad Fellow, he’ll spend four months working at each of three partner Gardens: Hidcote Manor Garden in Gloucestershire, U.K., Hyogo Prefectural Conservatory and Academy in Awaji-shi, Hyogo, Japan, and Longwood Gardens. James’ scholarship, his dedication to service plus his sense of adventure have been rewarded in this shower of accolades. Another Horticulture Hokie we can all be proud of!

Container Herb Garden Extraordinaire

First place winner for best container herb garden in Greg Welbaum’s Medicinal Plants class this fall was Hort major, Kate Truxell. Students voted for the best garden in the class and the winner received a Kroger Gift Certificate. Second place went to Biological Sciences major, Karl Compton and third place was Sonya Hodges, another Hort major.

Cider Production Short Course

Greg Peck, Tremain Hatch, and colleagues from FST and AEEC held a 2-day hard cider short course on the Blacksburg campus in early November. The sold out workshop was attended by nearly 40 participants who represented most of Virginia’s hard cider producers. Other attendees came from as far away as Vermont and Iowa. Presentations covered the gamut from apple production to fermentation biochemistry to marketing and economics. In addition, there was a lab practicum and a sensory session focused on identifying flavor faults in ciders. For an overview of the course, visit Dr. Peck’s website at: http://blogs.ext.vt.edu/tree-fruit-horticulture/2014/09/03/cider-production-short-course-from-tree-to-bottle/.

Horticulture in the News

Megan O’Rourke’s Food Systems Field Course featured as a VT spotlight on achievement
To read this article, visit http://www.vt.edu/spotlight/achievement/2014-11-17-localfood/orourke.html

Megan O’Rourke comments in an NPR story about the opening of Red Sun Farms in Dublin, VA.
To read the article, visit http://wvtf.org/post/red-sun-farms-means-business-nrv

Floriculture News

Joyce Latimer organized a Greenhouse Energy Efficiency Workshop in Blackstone that included an energy audit tour of Clay’s Garden Center led by Josh Ludgate of Exact Energy.

Joyce Latimer joined members of the Virginia Flower Growers Association on a tour of the NC State University Poinsettia Trials where 113 cultivars were produced for evaluation.

AREC News

Getting Started in the Greenhouse Business School held at Southern Piedmont AREC
Recent emphasis on local foods and small acreage farms have stimulated interest in using greenhouses and high tunnels for food production and edible landscapes, or for growing flowers. Over 40 people, including 15 VCE agents, attended the latest program designed to assist clients to identify and qualify opportunities to produce and market a variety of greenhouse crops. The program included training on both the complexities of managing the business and production details. The program was organized by Joyce Latimer with other speakers from our department including Holly Scoggins, Allen Straw and Amber Vallotton, as well as a number of our VCE agents, VSU specialists and outside contacts. Participant comments were positive: “This program has made me realize that my direction is spot on. It’s helped educate me and helped me realize where I need to improve and specialize.” “It has reinforced my idea that high tunnels will be better for me. Cost to start-up versus profit and years I want to wait for profit steers me away from greenhouse.” “I know to start smaller, research more!”

Activities at the Hampton Roads AREC
Laurie Fox (project coordinator) and the Virginia Beach Master Gardener Water Stewards partnered with the Norfolk Rotary Club to install a final planting in the Buffer Demonstration Garden at the Hampton Roads AREC. This project fulfills the Club’s initiative to work on an environmental project in the community as well as the Master Gardener’s mission for educational credits. This 8 year, 18 phase project includes seven unique buffer gardens around the AREC’s stormwater and irrigation pond. The gardens will be accessible to the public, to complement the 5 acres of public demonstration gardens already in place at the AREC. The buffer project will be completed in the spring with the installation of a walking trail and interpretational signage.

Mike Andruczyk, Horticulture Agent in Chesapeake VA, recently coordinated a modified version of the Master Gardener class for prisoners at the Naval Consolidated Brig in Chesapeake. Eight instructors (including Laurie Fox) underwent background checks and orientation training necessary to participate. This pilot program was a partnership between VCE and the Navy Brig Vocational Development Team. The goal is to provide prisoners with horticultural training in a short-term program that they can complete before discharge. The horticultural information and skills they learned are
intended to provide them with a credential to assist in their ability to transfer back into the community. All nine students in this first class completed the Master Gardener training, passed their Virginia Pesticide Applicators Certification test and graduated on December 8\textsuperscript{th}.

Grants and Funding

Megan O’Rourke along with co-investigators in the College of Natural Resources were awarded $499,847 by USDA for their proposal entitled, “Harnessing plant biodiversity at multiple spatial scales to increase ecosystem services in agriculture.” The team hopes to increase the sustainability of vegetable production on the Eastern Shore by conserving beneficial organisms through establishing native vegetation on less productive land. The team will be tracking bee, bat, bird, and deer populations and estimating their effect on vegetable yields as well as their value to tourism on the Eastern Shore.

Publications


Yang Jae Kang, Sue K Kim, Moon Young Kim, Puji Lestari, Kil Hyun Kim, Bo-Keun Ha, Tae Hwan Jun, Won Joo Hwang, Taeyoung Lee, Jayern Lee, Sangrea Shim, Min Young Yoon, Young Eun Jang, Kwang Soo Han, Puntaree Taeprayoon, Na Yoon, Prakit Somta, Patcharin Tanya, Kwang Soo Kim, Jae-Gyun Gwag, Jung-Kyung Moon, Yeong-Ho Lee, Beom- Seok Park, Aureliano Bombarely, Jeffrey J Doyle, Scott A Jackson, Roland Schaflieitner, Peerasak Srinives, Rajeev K Varshney, Suk-Ha Lee (2014) Genome sequence of mungbean and insights into evolution within *Vigna* species. Nature Communications Article number: 5443 doi:10.1038/ncomms6443

http://www.nature.com/ncomms/2014/141111/ncomms6443/full/ncomms6443.html?WT.ec_id=NCOMMS-20141115
Hahn Horticulture Garden Events

Get Acquainted with the New Garden Director, Robert McDuffie

**Wednesday Garden Talk, January 21, 2015, 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.**

Robert McDuffie will share what he does at Virginia Tech, his previous involvement with the garden, and his future plans as Director of the Hahn Horticulture Garden.

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Guest Presentation: Peter Hatch: "A Rich Spot of Earth: Thomas Jefferson's Revolutionary Garden at Monticello"

**Thursday, January 22, 2015, 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.**

The Hahn Horticulture Garden is partnering with Historic Smithfield Plantation to offer this historic garden lecture by Peter Hatch, Director of Garden and Grounds at Monticello.

The talk entitled: "A Rich Spot of Earth: Thomas Jefferson's Revolutionary Garden at Monticello" derives from his similarly named volume telling the history of Jefferson's unique vegetable garden at Monticello and his lasting influence on American culinary, garden, and landscape history. The book also showcases the 1980's project that restored the garden to its original glory. Peter J. Hatch was Director of Gardens and Grounds at Monticello 1977 to 2013. Hatch has been responsible for the maintenance, interpretation, and conservation of its 2,400-acre landscape, has written several previous books on Jefferson’s gardens, and is an adviser for First Lady Michelle Obama's White House kitchen garden. He lives in Charlottesville, Virginia.

$20 general public/$15 Friends of the Garden and Smithfield Patriots.

Please pre-register. Location: TBD

To register, contact Stephanie at vtgarden@vt.edu or 540-231-5970.

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Other Garden News

We have brand new shirts, hats, and mugs with our new design element! We have youth, adult, and ladies fit sizes in many different colors. All gift items with the old design element are half-price and a great way to commemorate the legacy of the garden before the new design is fully embraced.

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From the Appalachian Trail: Closing in on Springer Mountain, Georgia

Roger Harris is nearing completion of all 2200 miles of the Appalachian Trail. He is now without his hiking companion (his dog Rocket) because of no-dog regulations in the Smoky Mountains. He recently trekked through Max Patch (named, apparently for a horse named Max that would escape to that particular patch of ground) where some Horticulture Hokies left him a note on the trail. Less than 200 miles to go and he is moving about 20 miles or more a day. There has been a bit of snow and ice, but all in all, the weather has been favorable through some of the highest peaks of the trail. Current E.T.A. at trail end on Springer Mountain is December 23. Roger sends his thanks to everyone for their good wishes and trail care packages.