Greetings everyone! The end of the academic year is upon us. There is currently a lot of activity about as folks are simultaneously planning for finals and for summer internships. Congratulations to the 20 students who will soon join our alumni. We are very proud of you! This week has been a busy one for VT Horticulture on Facebook. Response to the announcement of Alex Niemiera (University Wine Award for Teaching) and Dave Close’s (University Alumni Award for Extension) awards this week have resulted in over 10,000 engagements, handily surpassing our previous most active week, late August 2015, when local celebrity Stinky Phil made his appearance. We’re on track to break 600 followers in the next month. Pris Sears maintains our facebook page and it is always current with news and interesting photos. Check it out at https://facebook.com/VirginiaTechHorticulture/. This past month was an important one in the development of the new School of Plant and Environmental Sciences. The past few months have been filled with discussion on how we can best mesh the culture of the three departments (HORT, PPWS, and CSES). A Town Hall Meeting was led by Dean Grant and was followed a few days later by a vote of the faculty in the three departments. A strong majority of faculty feel that the concept is good and that we should move forward with the school. A “pre-proposal” is currently circulating through the university administration. The next step will be the development of a “full proposal” that lays out the nuts and bolts of organization. We are anticipating a slow process and expect the school to be launched 1-2 years from now. We will retain our current academic programs when we move into the school, although the curriculum will hopefully be enhanced. I am sad to announce that Constance Close, our Human Resources manager will be leaving us soon to take a job outside of Virginia Tech. We will certainly miss her but we are excited for her to have this new opportunity. We wish her all the best in her new position. Come celebrate horticulture with us this June 11th at the annual Garden Gala! I hope that you enjoy this edition of our monthly e-newsletter. Please pass it on! — Roger

@VTFloralDesign, aka. Barbara Leshyn took over the @im_a_hokie twitter campaign. @im_a_hokie is a marketing campaign put on by University Relations Media. Every week a different Hokie (faculty, staff, or student) is selected to take over the twitter feed and tweets about their program. Barbara tweeted 55 times about VT Floral Design, Horticulture, CALS and other events on campus such as the Plant Sale, Relay for Life and Spring Game. @VTFloralDesign received over 65,000 engagements (twitter talk), hundreds of retweets and likes. Because the Roanoke Times saw the floral design twitter take over, they did a piece on VT Floral Design. Here is the link to the Roanoke Times story.
Undergraduate News

Congratulations to Brandon Kelly, who was awarded the 2016 Rita Hubbard scholarship (Newport News Master Gardener Association). Brandon is a junior in Landscape Contracting.

The Virginia Tech Kappa Chapter of Pi Alpha Xi (PAX), the Honor Society for Horticulture, held their 2016 Spring Initiation Banquet on March 22nd at Bull ‘n Bones restaurant. President Annie Saunders led the ceremony with the help of other officers and the faculty advisor, Holly Scoggins. Eighteen new members were initiated into PAX, including William Adams, Leeanne Bell, Timothy Bell, Tim Bryant, Leah Hirsh, Casey Lynn Hoff, Maurice Jones III, Brendan Burns Kelly, Wonjae Phillip Kim, Charleigh Larson, Grayson Lyons, Ella Reeves, Patrick Riley, Micah Staker Smalley, Laura Lynn Stange, Faith Taylor, Lucas M. Walton, and Laura Yuhase. Congratulations to all on their academic achievements and commitment to service.

Holly Scoggins’s 2016 Ornamental Plant Production & Marketing Class on tour at B.B. Barns Garden Center.

The 2016 class for HORT 4614, Ornamental Plant Production and Marketing, traveled throughout Western North Carolina April 7-8, visiting top-notch businesses such as Hawksridge Nursery (Hickory), Carolina Native Nursery (Barnesville), Van Wingerden International Greenhouses (Mills River), B.B. Barns Garden Center (Fletcher). We also met with Dr. Tom Ranney and his colleagues for a tour of the ornamental plant breeding and introduction program at the Mountain Horticultural Crops Research and Extension Center (Mills River). Past students have described these tours and talks with successful growers and business leaders throughout the region as the “best learning experience a student can get” - and this year was no exception. Thanks to Teaching Assistant Leslie Peck and Research Technician Margaret Aiken for all their assistance as well.

Growing Tulips for Profit Project.

Students of Horticulture and Ag Econ grew 2000 tulips for a special study class. The class was designed for students to plan, plant, grow and harvest tulips to see if the project would be profitable in a student run farm. The students kept a log of all their expenditures and came up with a per stem price of the tulips. In the end the tulips were used in random acts of kindness but the students did learn that you have to grow a lot more tulips and diversify to make a better return.

Elizabeth Wilson with her award winning poster at the VT Engage Poster Competition

Elizabeth Wilson took 3rd place in the VT Engage Poster Session yesterday for her CAFS capstone entitled “Buzzing about pollinator gardens: Promotion of Ecosystem Services”. This capstone project was a real-world hands-on collaboration with a community partner, and in this case the Hale Y Community Garden. Along with the poster, Elizabeth shared K - 12 curriculum and material for adult learning all about pollinators! She made a video about her project which can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=luzSlzgg6Uw

Elizabeth Wilson with her award winning poster at the VT Engage Poster Competition

Growing Tulips for Profit Project.
Graduate Student News

Graduate student Francisco Javier de la Mota Daniel has been awarded the 2016 Massey scholarship in International Horticulture. He plans to use the funding to present his research at the ISHS conference on landscape & urban horticulture in Greece, this summer.

Leslie K. Peck, M.S. graduate student in Horticulture, successfully defended her research on April 18th. Her thesis is entitled “Pre- and postharvest practices for optimizing the postharvest quality of cut delphinium, dahlia, and sunflower.” Her advisor is Holly Scoggins and committee includes Joyce Latimer and Jim Owen. Margaret Aiken, Floriculture Research Technician, was integral to Leslie’s research endeavors. Leslie has accepted a position as Horticulture Agent with Forsyth County Extension (Winston-Salem area), NC State University. Leslie has been an outstanding student, researcher, and teaching assistant; we wish her well in all future endeavors!

Faculty Awards

Alex Niemiera has been awarded the W.E. Wine Award, the most prestigious teaching award at Virginia Tech. Included in his nomination letter graduate student Jacob Shreckhise wrote “Although Dr. Niemiera has many advisees, teaches various classes, and has research responsibilities, he always makes every student feel as if they are deserving of his full attention. Not only does he make all of his students and GTAs feel welcome at all times, he always greets each with a smile and a comment tailored to the student.”

Read the VT News article here: http://vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2016/04/fs-alexandernieniera.html

Dave Close received the Alumni Award of Excellence in Extension, an award for Extension faculty members who made outstanding contributions to the land-grant mission of the university. He worked with the Virginia Master Gardener Association and the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences development office to establish the State Master Gardener Coordinator’s Endowment. In addition, he created the Master Gardener College Advisory Team to increase attendance at Master Gardener College.

Read the VT News article here: http://vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2016/04/fs-davidclose.html

Publications

Nursery and greenhouse producers, research and extension faculty, and representatives from allied fields undertook the task of updating the seminal paper “Strategic vision of container nursery irrigation in the next ten years” by Beeson et al. (2004). The new paper “The Next Ten Years: Strategic Vision of Water Resources for Nursery Producers” is an effort to formulate a renewed vision to address water issues affecting growers over the next 10 years. Read more via the HortTechnology Open Access article @http://horttech.ashspublications.org/content/26/2/121.full

Jeongwoon Kim, Yiming Liu, Xunzhong Zhang, Bingyu Zhao, Kevin L. Childs (2016) Analysis of salt-induced physiological and proline changes in 46 switchgrass (Panicum virgatum) lines indicates multiple response modes. Plant Physiology and Biochemistry 105:203-212

Funding

Holly Scoggins received 2nd year funding ($7,000) from the Virginia Agricultural Council for continuation of the project “Growing for the future: building a research hop yard at Virginia Tech.” The trellis spanning 0.69 acres was constructed last fall, half the yard planted (12 cultivars) in November, and the rest of the yard will be planted by mid-May. We appreciate the support of the VAC and VDACS for this new venture in high-value specialty crops. Thanks also to our Hop Squad. including John James, Margaret Aiken, Jeff Burr, and several students, for the physical help and moral support in getting this project off the ground (actually WAY off the ground: trellis wires are 19’ in the air).

Jayesh Samtani, Chuck Johnson, and Allen Straw were awarded $15,000 by the Virginia Agricultural Council for their proposal titled ‘Evaluation of Strawberry Cultivars and Advanced Genotypes in Virginia’.

Alex Hessler received funding from the Virginia Agricultural Council for grant Living Mulches to Improve Weed Management and Soil Quality in Virginia Fresh Market Tomato Production in the amount of $7,095. Co-investigators include Tom Kuhar in the Department of Entomology and Charles Cahoon in the Department of Plant Physiology, Pathology, and Weed Science.
Horticulture Club News

This past month was crazy busy for the Horticulture Club!

On the service side, they volunteered for Science Night at Kipps Elementary, and participated in VT’s Big Event.

There was also the famous annual plant sale! The sale was a huge success raising money for student travel and scholarships. This year, Maddie Pequigney designed the signature bright yellow shirts so that helpers were easy to spot.

At the Hort Club Banquet, the new officers were announced:

- President - Laura Yuhase
- Vice President - Maddie Pequigney
- Secretary - Laura Stange
- Treasurer - Timothy Bell
- Historian - Casey Hoff
- Plant Bed Maintenance - Justice Schlemmer
- Social Chairs - Laura Coggan & Meghan Garitty

Cleaning up the roadside for Big Event.

Plant Sale!

Science night at Kipps Elementary.

Hort Club graduating seniors at the banquet.

Next year’s Horticulture Club officers at banquet.
Outreach and Talks

Joyce Latimer and Kim Niewolny (ALCE) co-chair a steering committee on community, local and regional food systems. The steering committee organized and conducted a one-day forum on March 29th in Richmond. Over 80 participants shared their stories and networked with others working in the local foods arena. Presentation documents will soon be posted on the CLRFS Forum tab on the VCE Community, Local and Regional Food Systems webpage.

On April 26, Aureliano Bombarely and Megan O’Rourke were guest panelists in a discussion of GMOs and You: A Science Based Panel Discussion on Genetically Modified Organisms. The event was sponsored by the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences’ Graduate Student Council and VT’s Food Science Club.

Megan O’Rourke’s collaborative research on Integrated Pest Management in South East Asia was featured in the April 22nd edition of the Virginia Tech Daily News https://vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2016/04/041316-ipmfunding.html

Greg Welbaum represented VT at the American Society of Agronomy and Crop Science Society display during the USA Science and Engineering Festival in mid April at the convention center in Washington DC. The event featured approximately 3000 exhibits and was attended by an estimated 350,000. An estimated 8,000-10,000 students and their families visited the ASA-CSSA booth over the three days. The plant science booth featured demonstrations of aeroponics, crop identification, seed anatomy, and seed identification.

The e-GRO group held its 4th annual grower tour on April 11-13, visiting Long Island, New York. Our host was Dr. Nora Catlin of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County. The purpose of the trip is to visit greenhouses and to teach problem diagnostic skills. Eight graduate students, from University of Georgia, Purdue University, and NC State University, also participated in the tour. The locations visited include: Ivy Acres, Emma’s Garden Growers, CJ Van Bourgondien Greenhouses, Juniper Hill, Cornell Long Island Horticultural Research and Extension Center, Kawasaki Greenhouses, Kurt Weiss Greenhouses, Emerald Flora, and Mike Walsh and Sons Greenhouses. We appreciate their willingness to have us visit during the busy spring season.

Susan Day with Yujuan Chen of the FAO and fellow Hokie, and Professor Cheng Wang of the Chinese Academy of Forestry at the First Asia-Pacific Urban Forestry Meeting in Zhumhai, China.
Hahn Horticulture Garden Events

May and June Art in the Garden exhibit: watercolors and acrylics by Lisabeth Weisband.

Save the Date for the 12th annual Garden Gala at the Hahn! June 11, 2016 5:30 to 9pm!

For more information please visit http://www.hort.vt.edu/hhg/events.html or contact the Hahn Garden by phone, 540-231-5970, or by email, vtgarden@vt.edu.

Learn at Lunch at the Hahn Pavilion- FREE!

- May 4 12-1pm Bonsai: Discussion & Demonstration with Jerrie Pike, owner of Higo Garden Bonsai
- June 29 12-1pm Proactive Strategies for Managing Weeds in the Vegetable Garden with Alex Hessler

Tree lovers rejoice! The new Virginia Big Tree website has been released just in time for Arbor Day! The website was redesigned by Sarah Gugercin and John Peterson.

Website: http://bigtree.cnre.vt.edu/ (ctrl-shift-r if your browser has the old version saved)

VT News story: http://vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2016/04/cnre-bigtreewebsite.html

Greg Welbaum’s family got to visit the White House Garden while he was at the USA Science and Engineering Festival. The White House Garden tour is only offered twice a year- a very rare treat!

Constance Close, our HR Specialist, will be leaving the department to continue her expertise as a counselor at NRV Community Services. Maura Wood organized a farewell party for Constance at Macado’s. We will miss her!

Aaron Baxter (BS ‘01, MS ’05) and Sarah Holt (PhD ’11) became parents! Thomas Maximum Baxter was born Feb 4th at 10 PM. He weighed 7 lbs and 14 oz and was 20 inches long. In April, Sarah came for an office visit with little Thomas and brightened everyone’s day.
Last but not least, congratulations to our 2016 graduates!

**Environmental Horticulture**
- Christopher Artique
- Deborah Haines
- Barslund Judd
- Hannah Lucas
- Carolina Lucernoni
- Lauren Maletto
- Alicia Nester
- Marshall Pierce
- Martha Poe
- Corey Riedel
- Annie Saunders
- Charis Starnes
- Elizabeth Wilson

**Landscape Contracting**
- Christa Bush
- Christopher Dowdy
- Dylan Isom
- Robert Nance
- Landon Prever
- Kody Tingler
- Victoria Woffenden