As always, it has been a very busy year around Saunders Hall. Our horticulture family has grown since our last edition of SEEDS! We welcomed two new faculty members in August 2014. Ramon Arancibia joined us as assistant professor and vegetable crops specialist at the Eastern Shore AREC in Painter, and Auréliano Bombarely joined our Blacksburg campus as assistant professor in translational plant genomics and bioinformatics. Hannah Neuse has come on board as our new financial administrator, since we recently had to say goodbye to Ashley Wills, whose husband was transferred to Kentucky.

It was an eventful spring for us on campus as the plan for a new School of Plant and Environmental Sciences was announced by our dean, Alan Grant. The formation of such a school was put forward in the university strategic plan (2013-2018). As such, our department will technically be dissolved as early as next summer and horticulture will live as an essential component of the new school. This kind of streamlining of academic units has been going on across many universities. I am optimistic that the Department of Horticulture can flourish in the new school. We are early on in the planning stage for the school since the horticulture degree and majors will remain intact. Planning committees have been formed and are actively working to facilitate the formation and implementation of the new school.

Visitors watch and wait for “Stinky Phil” the corpse flower to bloom at the Department of Horticulture’s greenhouses. Greenhouse manager, Jeff Burr in pale blue plaid shirt, speaking to a horticulture class.

I hope that you are enjoying this beautiful Virginia fall. It is a special time of year for horticulturists as we enjoy the annual display of colorful foliage and the transition to the end of another good growing season. Many of you are savoring the fall harvest from your own vegetable garden or from your local farmers market and you are hopefully enjoying some wonderful Virginia apples.

Please see http://news.cals.vt.edu/spes/ for an update on progress and to leave comments and suggestions.

Are you receiving notice of our monthly e-newsletter? All the breaking news is there, including the flowering of “Stinky Phil”, our rare Armorophallus titanum, or giant corpse flower. Phil had a national following as he was approaching full flower and had thousands of visitors at the Virginia Tech greenhouse complex! If you didn’t get a chance to see Phil in August you can read about him in an archived newsletter. All monthly e-newsletters are archived on our web site at http://www.hort.vt.edu/. To receive notification of publication, just send me your e-mail address at rharris@vt.edu and your information will be added to our mailing list.

With kind regards,
Roger Harris
Department head

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Another successful garden gala

We had a record crowd of 270 on hand to enjoy the delightful weather, beautiful gardens, food, drinks, music, and fun. Thanks to the generosity of sponsors and auction item donors, more than $20,000 was raised to help with an array of operational expenses—everything from printing our Garden Guide to wages for our student workers. These funds also help pay for garden improvements such as new plants, renovated paths, and they also help us fulfill our educational mission as a living laboratory for both university students and the community. The garden is one of the best public-facing examples of both horticulture and agriculture on the Virginia Tech campus and that face was enchanting on the evening of June 13. Visit our Flickr site at to see all of this year’s gala photos!

https://www.flickr.com/photos/80269391@N06/albums

The 11th annual Hahn Horticulture Garden Gala was a tremendous success!

Remembering Associate Professor Emeritus, Alan McDaniel

Alan Robert McDaniel, 67, of Blacksburg died Monday, July 20, 2015, at Lewis Gale Montgomery Regional Hospital. He was born in Atlantic, Iowa, on Nov. 5, 1948. McDaniel received his Bachelor of Science from Iowa State in 1970 and Ph.D. from the University of Tennessee in 1975. He was an associate professor of horticulture and coordinating advisor for undergraduate students at Virginia Tech for 37 years and taught floral design. He also served as faculty advisor to the Virginia Tech Honor System. He served his community as chair of the State and National FFA nursery landscape contest, as Master of Ceremonies to the Miss Newport Pageant, volunteered time to teach Master Gardeners, and played percussion for the Blacksburg Community Band.

New faculty

Ramon Arancibia joined Virginia Tech as an assistant professor of horticulture and Extension specialist at the Eastern Shore Agricultural Research and Extension Center this past year. Arancibia has more than 25 years of experience in research and production of horticultural crops at five institutions: The University of Chile, University of California-Davis, Louisiana State University, University of the Virgin Islands, and Mississippi State University. In addition, he has collaborated in research activities with colleagues at the University of Florida, North Carolina State University, University of Georgia, and the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff.

His mission at the Eastern Shore AREC is to develop the horticulture and cropping systems program to improve sustainability of the vegetable industry. The concerns of the industry will be addressed by putting scientific knowledge to work through outreach activities in Extension. Research activities will be concentrated in sustainable production systems including organic, protected systems using plasticulture and high tunnels, and micro-irrigation in vegetable crops. Outreach activities will be focused on building a bridge between researchers, extension personnel and the stakeholders to address their needs with solid results that will enhance the quality of life of the community.
News from the Hahn Horticulture Garden

Robert McDuffie has taken on the role of Hahn Horticulture Garden director. He took over leadership from Holly Scoggins who served as director for the last 12 years. Scoggins and her staff did an exemplary job in transforming the garden into a top-notch teaching facility and a botanical wonderland, and we look forward to working with the new leadership. Here is a report on some of the garden’s improvement projects from McDuffie:

New planting beds in the Meadow Garden

If you’ve been on campus lately, you’ve probably noticed that the grass is not greener in the Hahn Meadow Garden. In fact, at the moment, it’s dead. It’s all part of a renovation of this portion of the meadow. In the next few weeks we will be tilling the soil and establishing a beautiful lawn of tall fescue, thanks to the hard work of the Turf Club of Virginia Tech. But it’s not going to be all turf. Soon enough you will see leaf-shaped planting beds being established in the new lawn area. These beds will be planted this fall with a mix of perennial bulbs called, Aladdin’s Carpet. So, in the spring, we will all enjoy the floral fireworks show!

After spring, those same beds will be filled with new annuals generously donated by Jim and Jennifer Monroe, owners of Hort Couture. Hort Couture is a grower and plant breeder that offers new innovative improvements of annuals, tropica ls, succulents, herbs, vegetables, and ornamental grasses for the discerning gardener. Its home is in nearby Beckley, West Virginia, and Jim is a graduate of the Department of Horticulture (’89). A long-time Virginia Tech supporter, Jim was named the Outstanding Alumnus from horticulture in 2006. Keep watching for progress!

In addition to the Meadow Garden plantings, our face on Washington Street is about to get a complete makeover. Later this fall we will be adding about 1,500 additional square feet of annual beds. Along with bulb plantings for spring, Hort Couture is also providing annuals for these new plantings.

Updated walkway to Patio Garden

The students in Tom Martin’s Hardscape and Materials Installation Class (Hort 3664) installed a new walkway connecting the Allee Walk with the Patio Garden. Originally, grass walkways provided a means of getting from the Allee Walk to the patio, but as time has gone on and trees have grown, it has become impossible to maintain turf along the paths. The solution was to build a new walk to the patio, made of the same pavers found on the patio. Work on this project began in mid-September.

New plant labels!

We have received the first set of new plant labels for the garden. They are made of black aluminum with silver letters. The company that makes them is called Lark Labels out of Wichita, Kansas. At present, there are no less than four different labeling systems in the garden. Eventually all the labels in the garden will be replaced with these new ones which are guaranteed to last the life of the plant.

Keep updated about improvement projects on our website, www.hort.vt.edu/hhg.

Aureliano Bombarely has arrived in the Department of Horticulture on the Blacksburg campus to assume a new faculty position in translational plant genomics. Bombarely uses genomic approaches to study evolution and plant domestication, especially for horticulture crops. He completed his doctoral studies at the University of Málaga, Spain working on transcriptomic analysis of strawberry fruit ripening.

Encouraged by the expansion of bioinformatic research in the plant sciences, he moved to the Boyce Thompson Institute in Ithaca, New York as a postdoctoral researcher for the Solanaceae Genomics Network database laboratory headed by Professor Lukas A. Mueller. While there, he was involved in database development and genome assemblies, specifically the transcriptomic analysis of allotetraploid Nicotiana tabacum. This work in plant genome evolution led to a second postdoc with a leading expert in plant polyploidy, Jeffrey Doyle, in the Department of Plant Biology at Cornell in Ithaca, New York. The main focus of this research was systematic analysis of perennials in the Glycine polyploid complex using Next Generation Sequencing technologies, such as RINASeq and Genotyping-By-Sequencing. During this period he also worked as a bioinformatician for Kerry Shaw in the Department of Neurobiology and Behavior at Cornell.

www.hort.vt.edu
Alumni News

Awards

The Department of Horticulture and the College of Agriculture and Life Science are pleased to announce the appointment of Mark Weathington (’95) as the new director of the J.C. Raulston Arboretum at NC State University. Weathington has a long horticultural history, officially starting in the field in 1991 as assistant manager for Laurel Creek Nursery. He received his B.S. in horticulture and sociology from Virginia Tech in 1995 and his M.S. in horticulture from Virginia Tech in 1999. Weathington’s public garden experience commenced in 1996 as a horticulturist for Atlanta Botanical Garden. In 1999, he joined the Norfolk Botanical Garden in Norfolk, Virginia, as director of horticulture and facilities for the 155-acre garden. In 2007, Weathington was appointed assistant director of the JCRA with a wide range of duties including curating collections, writing grants, and assisting in the arboretum administration. Weathington is a frequent and popular speaker, professing his love of plants and horticulture. The JCRA is a nationally and internationally acclaimed garden with one of the largest and most diverse collections of plants for landscape use in the Southeast, especially in the area of woody ornamentals. The JCRA is well known for plant introductions and innovative programming and outreach.

Retirements

Henry R. Owen (M.S. ’84, Ph.D. ’87) retired as professor of botany from Eastern Illinois University. He now lives in Gallatin, Tennessee, with his five dogs.

Gregory Bange (’77) retired from U.S. Customs and Border Protection in June 2012 after more than 31 years of service at John F. Kennedy International Airport. He now lives in Waxhaw, North Carolina.

In Memoriam

Bruce R. Arnzen (’59) died Feb. 16, 2014 in Reedville, Virginia. He was within two weeks of his 81st birthday. He was retired from the City of Richmond where he served as city horticulturist, chief of parks, chief of cemeteries, and acting director of Parks and Recreation. He also served with the National Park Service. He was well known for the gardens at his home on the Little Wicomico River, which were registered as a National Daylily Garden and were visited by thousands, both privately and during garden weeks.

Congratulations to Sandy Mudrinich (’85), who received The Garden Club of America 2014 Zone VII Horticulture Commendation award!

SEND US YOUR NEWS

We are always glad to hear what horticulture alumni are doing. So please send us news about your employment, achievements, special occasions, or your dog eating part of the couch (OK, skip the dog news). We will post your info (unless you do not wish it to be posted) in the next SEEDS Newsletter.

Send your news to Alex Niemiera: niemiera@vt.edu.
Mark Maslow has a horticulture career rooted in a love for landscaping

Mark Maslow (’04) is one of the few individuals that knew what he wanted to do before he even finished high school. Starting in his teens, he ran a small lawn care business and knew his only opportunity to expand and grow his business would be to broaden his horizons into landscaping.

His enthusiasm for the landscape-contracting realm prompted him to apply for early decision admission to the Department of Horticulture. While a horticulture undergraduate, he spent four very productive years learning and engaging with professors, fellow students, and industry professionals. He joined the Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association while he was a student and became a certified horticulturist. This opened up even more doors for networking with other highly successful landscape company owners. Each year, he also attended the Student Career Days Competition with the idea of meeting and learning from as many people as he possibly could.

By the time he was ready to graduate, Maslow had developed a tremendous network of industry professionals, Virginia Tech professors, and fellow student colleagues. After graduating, he formed the Southern Landscape Group in Evington, Virginia, which employs about 40 team members. The company’s mission statement is, “To create the highest quality landscapes that will enrich our client’s lives, enhance the value of their property, and build relationships that will last for years to come.”

He is very active in the Virginia landscape contracting industry as evidenced by his recent tenure as president of the VNLA. Maslow still reaches out to professors and has found that the relationships he created while at Virginia Tech in the horticulture department to be invaluable. He has several friends who are fellow alumni and also have their own landscape companies with whom he often collaborates. Maslow and his cohorts are active at Virginia Tech career fairs, serve as guest lecturers, and host visits to their companies, which help educate and connect the next generation of horticulture Hokie alumni.

Maslow has a few very simple business philosophies that continue to help his company grow and develop:

- Treat others as you want to be treated. That goes for clients, vendors, team members, and ANYONE you come in contact with.
- Customer service is No. 1: It starts with internal customer service among the staff and then extends to our clients.
- Have a vision, a mission and core values; always have the end goal in mind.
- Never leave a job less than perfect, even if it costs you money to finish it right.

While business is something Maslow absolutely loves and enjoys, he has learned to take time with his family.

“I spent a lot of time getting the business to the point of running smoothly and being very successful, but with two young girls I have also learned you can’t stray from your reference point,” he said. “You have to stay connected to your family. They are my biggest supporters!”

Maslow is certainly a very successful horticulture department graduate and his Virginia Tech horticulture family is very proud of his accomplishments!

Bombarely continued from page 2

this research was systematic analysis of perennials in the Glycine polyploid complex using Next Generation Sequencing technologies, such as RNASeq and Genotyping-By-Sequencing. During this period he also worked as a bioinformatician for Kerry Shaw in the Department of Neurobiology and Behavior at Cornell.

Bombarely is currently involved in several plant genome sequencing projects including Nicotiana benthamiana, Petunia and gloxinia, or Sinningia speciosa. The drafts of these genomes will lead to the development of new tools to facilitate breeding these crops while elucidating genomic modifications that accompany plant domestication. We are excited to have him in this new position in the Department of Horticulture, not only as a complement to two other new positions in the Departments of Plant Pathology, Physiology and Weed Science, and Crop and Soil Environmental Sciences, as part of a cluster hire in plant genomics, but also to interact with students and faculty within our department who want to use genomic and bioinformatic approaches to address their own scientific questions. His warm personality and accessibility will help to convey these complex topics to the horticultural community through new course offerings and outreach.
Alumni Information Form

The Virginia Tech Department of Horticulture would like to have current information on your activities and accomplishments. Please complete this form to let us know where you are and what you're doing.

Name: ___________________________________________ Year and Degree: _______________________________________

Home Address: ______________________________________________________________________________________

Employer: ___________________________________________ Current Job Title: _________________________________

Work Address: ___________________________________________ E-mail Address: ________________________________

News about Yourself (attach additional pages as needed): ______________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________

Send information to:
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