

Department of Horticulture

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Roger Harris, Department Head www.hort.vt.edu

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Greetings everyone! Spring semester is winding down and graduating seniors are preparing for their last group of final exams. There have even been some unconfirmed reports of "senioritis" around campus! We are very proud of our new alumni and look forward to a lifelong relationship. Horticulture students now graduate with either a Landscape Contracting or an Environmental Horticulture major (see list below). We are still conducting our search for the right faculty member to lead our Sustainable Food Systems initiative. I will hopefully have some good news for you in next month's newsletter. Alumni, we would love to hear from you. Please e-mail me with an update that you would like to share in next year's annual newsletter, "Seeds". Our current edition has been sent to press and should be in the mail soon. A good way to stay connected with VT is through the university [You Tube](#) channel. Please visit the [Horticulture](#) Department web site often for special departmental features. Enjoy! With kind regards, *Roger*

Congratulations new Bachelor of Science Horticulture alumni!

	<u>Landscape Contracting</u>		<u>Environmental Hort</u>
Amaal Alsharkawi	Andrew Kellinger	Jeffrey Thompson	Alex Hindman
Chris Amos	Ben McDevitt	Evan Ware	Adam Huff
Ben Critz	Mennen Middlebrooks	Trey Watford	Samantha Massa
Jason Focht	Kip Osborough	Josh Willis	Tommy Phannareth
Shannon Hodapp	Trevor Oyler	Billy Yuhase	Zach Pittinger
Anne Howell	Jon Potter		Brianna Swanson
			Amy Tran

Congratulations new Master of Science Horticulture alumni!

Shawn Appling - MS (floriculture)
Jared Carter - MS (genetics)
Cain Hickey - MS (viticulture)
Mara Grossman - MS (floriculture)
JB Snelson - MS - (floriculture)

Approximately 225 graduate students, academics, and other ecologists converged on Blacksburg recently for the annual conference of the Mid-Atlantic Chapter of the Ecological Society of America. The theme of the conference was "Disturbed Environments". This 2-day conference, chaired by **Susan Day**, was filled with oral and poster presentations and invited speakers on day 1, and an all-day field trip was taken to the Kayford Mountain mountaintop removal coal mine in West Virginia on day 2. Keynote speaker Greg Shriver (University of Delaware) presented results of a large-scale urban forest fragmentation study and results from studies on the effect of traffic noise on forest birds and the impact of native plants on biodiversity in suburban landscapes. This talk prompted discussion of the importance of urban forest fragments and the continuing need to protect them. The chapter subsequently passed a resolution supporting the preservation of the old-growth forest fragment at VT known as "Stadium Woods" (see [resolution](#) and more below).



Scene from the poster session



Larry Gibson shows the mountain top removal surrounding his home

Stadium Woods is an 11 acre old growth forest fragment next to Lane stadium that is threatened by development for an athletic facility. An action group which includes many VT students, staff, faculty, and alumni, as well as local citizens is actively working to save the woods. See [stadium woods action group](#)



Cain Hickey (left in photo) is a spring MS graduate in our viticulture program. When not hitting the books or chasing trout, he takes the *Virginia Wines are Great* message on the road, in this case to rock and roll guitar great Derek Trucks (right in photo). With music this good within easy driving distance of Winchester, Cain has decided to stay and pursue his PhD with advisor Tony Wolf.



Civic Ag students win honors

Rial Tombes, part of the first cohort of graduates from the cross-college Civic Agriculture and Food Systems (CAFS) minor directed by **Susan Clark**, has received the prestigious "Ut Prosim" award. See [award](#). In addition, 3 students in the CAFS minor received poster awards at the 2012 VT Engagement Showcase for their ALS 4214 CAFS Capstone Projects. Seniors, **Chelsea Grave's** and **Caitlin Miller's** poster won 1st place: "Blooms, Bees & Beneficial's: Farmscaping the Hale Y Community Garden"; and Senior, **Jeremy Mauck's** won 3rd place: "Grape Expectations-Grape Growing and Community Building with Rolling Fork Farm"

Greg Peck was recently interviewed by Associated Press writer Dean Fosdick for his nationally syndicated news feature. The topic was *growing apples organically*. While Greg assures me that it was not quite "viral" it was indeed featured by many publications across the country. See [viral](#) for an example.

Congratulations to **Rui "Harry" Xia** for passing his PhD preliminary exam. Harry is studying the molecular biology of apple tree growth and fruit production. His research is conducted at the Alson H. Smith, Jr. Agricultural Research and Extension Center in Winchester and at the USDA ARS Appalachian Fruit Research Station, Kearneysville, WV.

PhD student **Scott Lowman** and *Lynchburg Grows* were recently featured in a VT spotlight article. Scott is one of the three founders of this urban farming initiative in Lynchburg. Check it out at [VT feature](#)

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Joyce Latimer recently presented a *Grower Talks* webinar on Using Plant Growth Regulators to Enhance Production of Perennials.

Recent grant awards

Bingyu Zhao and Bret Tyler. Management of switchgrass disease by deploying host resistant genes and monitoring the dynamics of pathogen populations. USDA NIFA. \$800,000.

Bingyu Zhao. An integrated approach to improving plant biomass production. Colorado State University. \$147,698.

Hahn Horticulture Garden- Spring and Summer 2012

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.

Creating New Plants for Fun and Profit: A BEAUTIFUL GARDENS® WORKSHOP

Thursday May 10, 2012 6:00 - 8:00 p.m., Peggy Lee Hahn Garden Pavilion, \$15 Friends of the Garden members/\$20 general public; must pre-register, limited to 20 participants (includes reference materials and plants to take home). This two hour workshop will include classroom instruction followed by hands-on work with a number of plants.

Moss Garden Workshop with Delbert Jones

Saturday May 26, 2012 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., Peggy Lee Hahn Garden Pavilion, \$15 Friends of the Garden/\$20 general public, fee includes all supplies. Workshop is limited to 25 participants, must pre-register.



MICHAEL JAMES DEBRAUD

Hokie Spirit blooming in Virginia

A daylily adorned in orange and maroon has taken root, courtesy of alumna Linda Pinkham (ornamental horticulture '69). First developed by Pinkham in 2008 at Virginia Tech's Institute for Advanced Learning and Research in Danville, Va., the *Hemerocallis* "VT Spirit" was bred as part of the Beautiful Gardens program, which spurs economic growth of Virginia's plant industry while creating new homegrown plant varieties, according to Lisa Lipsey, program coordinator. Engineered to ensure a prolonged bloom season, the daylily is gaining popularity among Hokie gardeners. Brent and Becky's Bulbs in Gloucester, Va., is the first to offer the "VT Spirit" daylily to customers. "In the future, it will be available at garden centers across the state," said Pinkham. by SARAH FITZGERALD

Save the date: 8th Annual Garden Gala - June 9, 2012