Greetings faculty, staff, students, alumni, and friends! The new school year is just beginning and the campus is full of excitement. It is truly a time of optimism and anything seems possible. Will the Hokies run the table this year? Will the mountains have the best fall color in history? Stay tuned! Meanwhile, we welcomed our returning and 21 new undergraduates and 5 new graduate students at our annual fall department meeting of faculty, staff, and students last week in the wonderful new classroom building. A drawing was held and three lucky students were given $300 scholarships each. What a great way to start the new semester! All attendees walked away with a new long-sleeved VT Horticulture T-shirt. The proposal for the School of Plant and Environmental Sciences is finally off to university governance for approval and we are on track to begin the new arrangement by this time next year. We are excited about the synergy this will create for all of our programs, but especially the possibilities it will afford our undergraduate program. Late summer and fall is a wonderful time to check out what is blooming or to catch an educational program at the Hahn Horticulture Garden. Check out what is happening at http://www.hort.vt.edu/hhg/ at any time or see the update below to see what is on the near horizon. I hope you enjoy this first e-newsletter of the new academic year. Please pass it on!

— Roger

Welcome New Graduate Students!

Mccullough, Chris (Ph.D.) – Megan O’Rourke
Liu, Danyang (Ph.D.) – Jayesh Samtani
Wang, Kunru (Ph.D.) – Bingyu Zhao
Judd, Barsland (M.S.) – Holly Scoggins
Achara, Tej (M.S.) – Ramon Arancibia / Greg Welbaum

We also welcome Guo-qiang Wu, a visiting professor in Bingyu Zhao’s lab!

Congratulations to Hua Xiao and family! Her baby girl, Maia Zhanghua Liu, was born on May 30th.
Undergraduate News

Rain Garden Practicum Course
A four-day Rain Garden Practicum course (HORT 3584) was conducted the week prior to the start of the fall semester. Rain gardens, landscaped bowl-shape depressions, are a very popular and functional component of landscapes since they collect and greatly reduce runoff, pollutants, and sediment from entering groundwater and sewage systems. Rain gardens thereby decrease groundwater pollution and the amount of water that has to be treated at a wastewater treatment plant. The course was coordinated by Horticulture Department Professor Alex Niemiera. The course consisted of two days of classroom instruction covering rain garden fundamentals and design presented by guest lecturer Dr. Liz Riley from North Carolina State University; Dr. Riley’s research program specializes in rain garden soil types and plant species. The second two days were devoted to installing the rain garden in front of the Hahn Horticulture Garden; Mr. Robert McDuffie, Horticulture professor and Director of the Garden, instructed students on the preparation of the garden. Installation of plants and completion of the garden will occur in November after installation of hardscape details such as construction of deck and paver walkways and a kiosk. The rain garden will not only collect and filter the runoff from the adjacent road and parking lot but will serve as a new and attractive entry into the Hahn Horticulture Pavilion.

Summer Undergraduate Research
Congratulations to two MAOP students Carlos Toro (Bingyu Zhao) and Ashley Rhodes (Mark Williams) for finishing and presenting your work!

Chelsea Cereghino (SURF student in Mark William’s lab) was featured in VT News for her research examining rhizobia bacteria’s relationship with two legumes — clover and pea.

Read the full story here: https://vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2016/07/071816-fralin-surfplants.html
Graduate Student News

Brycen Hill (pictured here adorned with hops harvested at the AHS Jr. AREC) won best viticulture student paper at the Eastern Section meeting of the American Society for Enology and Viticulture meeting in St. Louis, Missouri, 19-21 July 2016. His paper, “Effects of variable rooting volume on growth, crop yield, and berry composition of Cabernet Sauvignon” was co-authored by Tony Wolf (HORT) and Amanda Stewart (FST).

Leslie Peck, Horticulture M.S. graduate in May 2016, presented her research at the 2016 conference for the American Society for Horticultural Science. The meeting was held August 8-11 in Atlanta, Georgia. Her oral presentation was entitled “The Impact of Deficit Irrigation on the Postharvest Vase Life of Cut Delphinium ‘Guardian Blue’ Flowers.” Her major advisor was Holly Scoggins; committee members included Jim Owen and Joyce Latimer. Leslie is employed as a Horticulture Extension Agent for Forsyth County, NC (Winston-Salem).

Samantha Taggart was selected as a recipient of the Gene and Ina Mae James Graduate Scholarship in the amount of $2,000 for the 2016-2017 academic year. She was selected for this scholarship based on her outstanding academic performance at Virginia Tech.

Samantha Taggart was awarded the SSARE graduate student grant entitled “Living Soil for a Sustainable Future: Assessing the Effects of Cover Crops and Tillage on the Soil Microbial Community and Health”. The purpose of the study is to examine the effects of cover cropping and tillage practices on the soil microbial community as well as other various soil physical and biological features that contribute to soil health. The results will inform farmers on how to utilize practices that enhance the functioning of the soil microbiome and improve agricultural sustainability.

Outreach

New extension publication

What in the World? International Produce Takes a Stand at Virginia Farmers Markets

This publication was the winner of our most recent i-Pad contest in the Extension Master Gardener Program. It was authored by Brenda Lynn, Virginia Cooperative Extension Master Gardener, Green Spring, VA. She identified the need for educational material and prepared this publication with the help of several Extension Agents and Specialists. It details production, cooking, and nutritional value of a number of international crops.

View it at: http://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/HORT/HORT-225/HORT-225.html
Publications


In the News

Mark Williams’s research on honey bees has yielded surprising results- the pesticides beekeepers use to improve honeybee health may be harming bees by damaging bacteria communities in their gut. This research has been featured in VT News and a local news channel- WFXR!

VT News article: http://vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2016/08/080816-fralin-honeybees.html


Holly Scoggins’s research on finding suitable hop varieties to grow in Virginia and the mid-Atlantic was featured in the Roanoke Times!

Roanoke Times article: http://www.roanoke.com/agriculture/hops-to-the-harvest-at-virginia-tech/article_5c523560-f81c-57f3-b1b2-6461c3cabb1.html

(Photo Matt Gentry, The Roanoke Times)
Hahn Horticulture Garden Events

September 1 to October 31 Art in the Garden exhibit: Bursting with Color with Karen Sewell.

Shovels and Buckets and Books, Oh My!
A super fun club focusing on garden or nature-related books and hands-on activities for youth in grades k-2!

- Ages: Open to all county youth (4-H and non 4-H members) in grades K-2
- Dates: Club meetings are on the following dates: September 7, 21; October 5, 19, 26; and November 2, 9. This totals 7 weeks.
- Times: 4:30 p.m.—6:00 p.m.
- Location: Hahn Horticulture Garden and Pavilion, Virginia Tech Campus
- Cost: $25 per child - This fee covers a small snack and all supplies

For more information please visit [http://www.hort.vt.edu/hhg/events.html](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 Wednesdays at the Hahn Pavilion- FREE!

- September 21, 12-1pm Simply Elemental Walk with Paula Golden
- October 5, 12-1pm Trees and Shrubs- the ceilings and walls of outdoor spaces with Alex Niemiera

Velva Groover found this teenage mutant ninja flower while out doing field work at Kentland Farm this past July! It is a fasciated black eyed Susan.
## Fall Semester 2016: Agriculture and Environment Seminar Series

**Tuesdays, 3:00-4:00 pm**  
Fralin Hall Auditorium  
*Available for 1 credit as ALS 5984*

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<td>8/30/16</td>
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<td>Krista Jacobsen</td>
<td>U. Kentucky</td>
<td>high tunnels, sustainable vegetable production</td>
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<td>Howard Skinner</td>
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<td>Syngent/BASF</td>
<td>agricultural industry panel discussion</td>
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<td>ENT</td>
<td>Anne Nielsen</td>
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