Cornell University
Department of Horticulture

Alumni Newsletter

Department of Horticulture | 134A Plant Science Building | Cornell University | 607.255.4568 | hort.cals.cornell.edu

# Department Continues to Grow as Administration Considers Reorganizing Plant Sciences Cohort

Dear Alumni and Friends,

Horticulturists throughout the eastern United States are wondering what the effects of the extreme weather will be on our crops this year, particularly on fruit. Warm weather has pushed buds to break in late March, with two more months of frost risk remaining. Rainfall for the past six months has been much less than normal. Insects are already active, including ticks. The deer population is at an all-time high. Regardless of what happens in successive months, we will learn some things that we didn't know before, and this is what makes farming so challenging and interesting.

Cornell always seems to be in the news, fortunately for mostly good reasons. This past month, the big news was the first-ever flowering of the Cornell corpse lily. In just two days, the greenhouse welcomed 10,000 visitors and had nearly 400,000 hits on the web cam. We had offers of pollen from around the world, but selected a donor flower from Binghamton to use for the production of seeds. (This species sheds pollen after the flowers are receptive; hence, pollen from another plant must be used to pollinate.) If you haven't seen the photos or read the story, they are at: http://www.news.cornell.edu/stories/March12/CorpseFlower.html.

Unfortunately, the copse lily flowered in a location that was not ideal. All the plants had to be moved out of the Conservatory last year because the glass was falling from the ceiling, creating an unsafe environment for workers and visitors. The Conservatory will be replaced next year, but for now, all of the resident plants have found temporary homes in other places around campus.

For the past several years, students from Nina Bassuk's class, "Creating the Urban Eden," have been installing new landscapes around select buildings on campus. This year they have been working on the CCC building, which is next to Roberts Hall on the Ag Quad. They were also "contracted" to install the new landscape in the courtyard of the ILR building. This class has made quite an impact on the appearance of our campus over the years.

Also in the news has been Courtney Weber's new strawberry, Purple Wonder. "The color comes with a very good flavor. Dark-colored strawberry varieties are not unknown, but often varieties that get dark have a poor flavor as they ripen. But this one seems to get sweeter the riper it gets."

Also in the news is Frank Rossi. He and colleague Gilbert Hanse, MLA '89, will design the golf course that will reintroduce the sport of golf to the 2016 Olympics in Brazil for the first time since 1904. "This is one of the biggest golf course projects in the past 50 years — and probably the next 50 years." Rossi is advising on the selection of proper turfgrass for the challenging environment. The turf team, including Marty Petrovic, is quoted in the May issue of *Consumer Reports* (http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/magazine/2012/04/the-slacker-s-guide-to-a-great-lawn/) about how to have a nice lawn and still be lazy.

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# PALS: A Horticultural Perspective

Plant and Life Science Publishing (PALS), formerly NRAES, was grafted to the Department of Horticulture in July 2011. PALS' mission is to partner with individual faculty or groups to publish comprehensive books or other resources for use in educational programs, college courses, agri-business management, and self-directed learning. PALS' future depends on fruitful collaborations with CALS faculty and their colleagues in government, in industry, and from other universities and states.

NRAES had a tradition of believing in, and putting our cash flow behind, faculty ideas. PALS will continue that tradition. PALS will invest its cash flow in a project if we can recover the investment through sales soon after printing. PALS' book distribution center is in room 34 Plant Science. Kent Smith, PALS Business Manager, has honchoed distribution since 2002. Kent ships an average of 18,000 books per year. Horticulture department staff and students receive a 40% discount off list price and are not charged sales tax. There is no shipping and handling charge if the order is picked up in room 34.

The PALS staff is supplemented with seasonal workers including students, editors, and designers. For spring 2012, PALS employs four students who are updating book design files, restarting our news release marketing, and documenting a process for making e-books.

PALS Director Marty Sailus has shepherded more than 120 books through the publishing process and more than 30 national and regional conferences to completion. If you would like to chat about a project idea, send Marty an email at mas10@cornell.edu and we can set up a meeting. The limiting factor to PALS' growth and sustainability is new book projects. PALS' future depends on nurturing new collaborations. So, keep the program in mind if publishing needs come up locally or in multi-state discussions. Help make PALS grow!

# *Save the date for these summer events!*

**Sunday, May 27, 2012**: Spring 2012 Commencement
Breakfast will be served for graduating plant sciences students from 7:00-8:30 a.m. in Emerson Hall 135. All are welcome! **RSVP by May 21** to Leah Cook at lcc2@cornell.edu.

**Wednesday, June 13, 2012**: Emeritus Professors Luncheon
Make plans now to join us for our annual informal luncheon. Come hear what's going on in the department. Invitations will be sent out as the date draws near, but if you have any questions, contact Leah Cook at 255-4568 or lcc2@cornell.edu.

**Saturday, July 7, 2012**: Public Open House at the Long Island Horticultural Research & Extension Center in Riverhead, NY
Open House for the public from 10:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. rain or shine. Everyone is welcome and admission is free. During the open house, there will be guided garden tours, a lecture on flower arranging, a children's activity, wagon rides around the 68-acre research farm, a plant sale, and more. See www.LongIslandHorticulture.cornell.edu for a full schedule and times of activities. If there are questions, call 727-3595 or email mpb27@cornell.edu. The LIHREC is located at 3059 Sound Ave. in Riverhead, NY.

**Saturday, July 14, 2012**: Department Party & Barbecue
Marvin and Allison Pritts are hosting a department party and barbecue at their home in Trumansburg. All are welcome. Invitations will be sent out as the date draws near, but if you have any questions, contact Marvin at mpp3@cornell.edu.

**Tuesday, July 24, 2012**: Floriculture Field Day, Cornell University
Participants will view the thousands of annuals and perennials that are being trialed at Blue Grass Lane. More information is available at: www.greenhouse.cornell.edu.

*Looking ahead...*
**2013**: 125th anniversary of original department; 100th anniversary of three separate departments (FOH, POM, VEG)! We will be announcing celebration plans in late 2012. Stay tuned!

# Department Continues to Grow as Administration Considers Reorganizing Plant Sciences Cohort

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You may have heard Thomas Bjorkman speaking on NPR in April about broccoli. This news story broke when the Supreme Court justices were debating the health care law, and one of the justices questioned whether people could be forced to eat broccoli for their health. It should come as no surprise that horticulture is at the center of our most important political debates! As further evidence, Dave Wolfe was recently interviewed on NPR for his work on climate change.

In May, we hosted Michelle Shearer, the 2011 National Teacher of the Year, who spoke on "Teaching, Learning and the Power of the Human Factor." The addition of education faculty to our department has been a real catalyst for exciting changes. For example, we are revising the plant sciences major to include several tracks that correspond with careers — as opposed to older tracks that correspond to departments. In addition, we are relaunching the horticulture minor (see story on page seven) to allow students from across the university to learn something about plants. Surprisingly, we are getting a lot of hotel students in our introductory classes, so this will allow them (and others) to explore their interests in horticulture in greater depth.

Discussions are under way about reorganizing the five departments in the plant sciences cohort at Cornell. Most faculty are interested in better coordinating faculty hiring, graduate programs, and the undergraduate curriculum. There is less enthusiasm for any sort of structural rearrangement, but nothing has been determined yet.

Our allocation from the state has not decreased this year and looks steady for next year, so that is good. However, past over-commitment by administration has resulted in the need for departments to contribute to the university's deficit. That's not so good.

This is the only time of year when we are allowed to ask alumni and friends for donations, so consider this your invitation to contribute to the department. Your donation will be deposited into the Horticulture Excellence Fund, where it will be used for critical needs. For $100,000 or more, we are allowed to set up a named endowment, and the money can be designated for a specific use, in perpetuity. More often, smaller gifts are given where the donor indicates his or her intent. These intentions are followed as closely as possible. Over the next few weeks, several undergraduate students will be given awards from endowments that were set up years ago by generous alumni and friends. These are very much appreciated by the student recipients.

I hope you are doing well. As always, please send us your latest news so we can share it with others. Have a wonderful summer, and perhaps I will see some of you at the ASHS meetings in Miami this July. And remember: Old horticulturists never die — they just go to pot.

Sincerely,
Marvin Pritts
Professor and Chairman

# Congrats, Spring 2012 Horticulture Prize Winners!

On Tuesday, May 8, the Department of Horticulture held an informal coffee hour and reception to recognize its spring 2012 horticulture prize winners.

**ASHS Collegiate Scholars**: Michael Basedow, DeAnna D'Attilio, Jonathan Flickinger, Xiaoyun "Janet" Gong, Ross Hathaway
**ASHS Outstanding Horticulture Student**: Madeline Olberg

**Kenneth Post Foundation Award**: Alexander Traven
**H.R. Schenkel Memorial Fund Award**: Madeline Olberg
**NYSFIRE Fund Award**: Lori Moshman
**NYSFIREF Boodley Award**: Ross Hathaway
**NYSFIREF Seeley Award**: DeAnna D'Attilio
**NYSFIREF Feldis Award**: Chelsea VanAcker
**NYSFIREF Yedowitz Award**: Hanna Rosner-Katz

**Spring 2012 prize winners (from left): Hanna Rosner-Katz, Madeline Olberg, DeAnna D'Attilio, Chelsea VanAcker, Xiaoyun Gong, Lori Moshman, Michael Basedow, Jonathan Flickinger and Ross Hathaway. Not pictured: Alex Traven.**

# ALUMNI NEWS FROM NEAR AND FAR

**Lee Altier** (PhD '92) writes, "Just finishing my 17th year in the College of Agriculture at California State University, Chico. After four years of being the faculty development director on campus, I will be returning full-time in the fall to horticultural activities. During the summers, I take students and family to Thailand to teach and study hill-slope farming systems with colleagues at Chiang Mai University. I also direct the Organic Vegetable Project, a four-year-old collaborative effort with student managers. Free time is spent bicycling, sailing, and back-country skiing with my wife, Karen, and two children. I miss our time in Ithaca hashing with harrier friends in the department, like Ian, Marvin, and Frank!" (LAltier@csuchico.edu)

**Yao-Chien Alex Chang** (PhD '02) left Ithaca and returned to Taiwan in January 2004 after completing his PhD and post-doc work with Bill Miller. In August 2004, he became a faculty member at National Taiwan University, the best university in Taiwan. Since then, he has devoted himself to orchids and cut flowers research and taught orchid and general floriculture courses. He has earned the Award of Excellent Teaching from the college four times. In August 2011, he was promoted to associate professor. He enjoys meeting fellow Cornellians at international conferences. The next chance will be at the ASHS 2012 Conference in Miami. His expertise in orchids has gained some global recognition, and he has been invited several times to deliver talks in foreign countries. In September 2011, he was awarded the ASHS Ornamental Publication Award at the ASHS Conference in Hawai'i. He would like to attribute the honor to the training he received at Cornell. (alexchang@ntu.edu.tw)

**James Critelli** (BS '98) reports he "had an article in the Elmira paper in November, as well as an article in the Farm Credit financial partner magazine, from March 21." Read more here: http://www.freshplaza.com/news_detail.asp?id=89989 and https://www.farmcrediteast.com/industry-support/~/media/Files/Magazines/SPRING_2012_FPmag.ashx." (jamie.critelli@gmail.com)

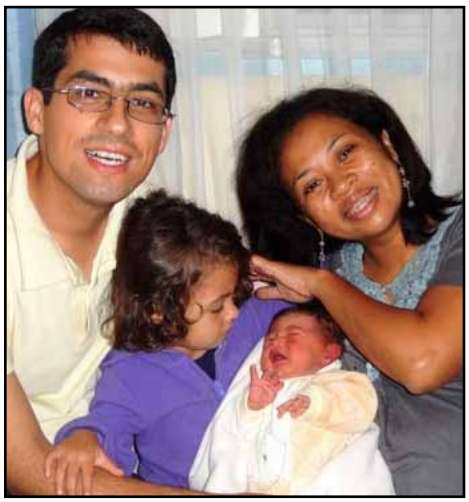
**Eure Veet Deha** (MS '85) reports that she's applying for a horticulturist position with the Smithsonian (Hirshhorn Garden) in DC. "Aside from looking for hort (or any) work, I'm enjoying the blue skies and clear sun of Santa Fe. Would love to see any veg croppers who stop by and talk about heydays. Moria and **Steve Peters** (MS '86) were my only connection; now they're in Arizona on a temporary (maybe longer) assignment with a seed cooperative. Their twin girls, Sasha and Kendra, are living in their house in a small co-housing community, not far from the co-housing community where I and my sister live, the Commons on the Alameda. My son, Mark, and his wife, Emily, in Denver just celebrated their 20th anniversary--how time flies! Of their five kids, the oldest, Maddie, is a freshman at NYU's Tisch School of Drama. I don't feel old, mostly because it's a luxury at this point--can't afford to retire! Anyone need an olericulturist with a lifetime of experience?" (veetd@cybermesa.com)

**Fanja Fawbush** (PhD '08) and family announce the arrival of Aliyyeh Kaliana Fawbush, their second daughter, on the 18th of January in Antananarivo, Madagascar. Aliyyeh (pronounced awe-lee-ye) is of Arabic and Hebrew roots and means "noble" and "excellent." Kaliana (pronounced ka-leen in Malagasy) is a Malagasy name meaning "something done well and attentively." (fanjafawbush@gmail.com)

**John Gerber** (PhD Veg '78), professor of sustainable food and farming at the University of Massachusetts, will be joining the 94-year-old Stockbridge School of Agriculture as part of a major institutional restructuring to "revitalize the agricultural mission of the land grant university" in Massachusetts. John has provided leadership for the development of the Sustainable Food and Farming program at UMass, which has experienced a 10-fold increase in majors in the past eight years." (jgerber@psis.umass.edu)

**Kristen Keryk** (BS '05, MPS '08) writes that she's finishing her second year teaching Plant Science at John Bowne High School in Flushing, Queens. "There isn't really anything else going on," she adds. "Adult life has been treating me well!" (kristenkeryk@gmail.com)

Dave Wolfe has an update on **Benyamin Lakitan** (PhD '89), who worked on flooding tolerance in Phaseolus beans: "Benyamin initially went back to his



**Fanja Fawbush (PhD '08) with her family, including newly-arrived Aliyyeh.**

home country, Indonesia, and held posts in academia, including a deanship at Sriwijaya University in Sumatra, but since 2010 has been Deputy Minister for the Ministry of Research and Technology, one of the highest science positions in the country, meeting with the president and his cabinet on a fairly routine basis. I visited with him in Jakarta in January while there working on a USAID proposal focused on adaptation to climate change with colleagues at the University of Indonesia and the Agriculture University in Bogor." (blakitan@ristek.go.id)

**Chris Laughton** (BS FOH '94) graduated with an MBA from UMass Amherst this past May and took a position as Director of Knowledge Exchange at Farm Credit East in Enfield, CT. He is living in Connecticut now with his dog, Bear. (cal9@cornell.edu)

**Michelle Leinfelder-Miles** (PhD '10) writes, "I am happy to announce that Ed has accepted the position of assistant tomato breeder with Nunhems (seed company) in Lodi. Nunhems currently has the most-planted processing tomato variety in California, and as an international company, he will have travel opportunities to countries as far and wide as Chile, Australia, and Spain. I have accepted the position of Delta Crops Resource Management Advisor with the University of California Cooperative Extension. This is a regional position serving the counties of San Joaquin, Sacramento, Yolo, Solano, and Contra Costa. In this position, I will develop a research and extension program that addresses on-farm innovation to crop production and resource management in the Delta region. Ed and I are happy to be settling here and are looking forward to getting involved in my family's farm and our community." (mmleinfelder@gmail.com)

**Dave Wolfe (left) with Benyamin Lakitan (PhD '89) in Indonesia recently.**

**Jim Lorenzen** (PhD Veg '88) sends this note: "Esther and I came to IITA five years ago, first in Uganda as banana/plantain breeder, and relocated to Arusha, Tanzania early last year. Our youngest graduated from the Int'l School of Uganda with her IB a few years ago and is now a third-year senior at Knox College in Illinois--double major in chem/physics. Our son is in Cape Town doing a law degree, and our oldest is also in Central Illinois where her husband has a research position with Caterpillar. We became grandparents last year." (j.lorenzen@cgiar.org)

**Mary-Howell (Roberts) Martens** (MS Veg '82) says that, aside from now being the mother of a Cornell sophomore, Elizabeth Martens, who is majoring in animal science/pre-vet, she has been appointed to a national agricultural advisory committee, the Advisory Committee on Biotechnology and 21st Century Agriculture, or AC21, by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "We have had three meetings now--an interesting experience indeed! In addition to operating the 1400-acre organic crop farm, my husband and I own and operate Lakeview Organic Grain, an organic feed mill and seed operation serving organic farmers throughout the Northeast. I served on the Cornell CALS Deans Advisory committee 2002-2009." (mh@lakevieworganicgrain.com)

**Eve Springwood Minson** (MPS '02) notes: "Just wanted to share the good news that I am starting out the new year expanding my farm education work in New Jersey and will be working with NOFA NJ (located at Duke Farms) as their new beginner farmer incubator program manager. I will continue working with Duke Farms

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**Michelle Leinfelder-Miles (PhD '10) and her husband, Ed Miles, at their wedding.**

# ALUMNI NEWS FROM NEAR AND FAR

(continued from page five)

on their community garden expansion, teaching classes and doing some planning work for them as they move toward their grand opening of the Sustainability Center in May, and I will begin working for NOFA NJ part-time now. No big CSA this year, just cover crops, lots of ginger and herbs, a much smaller crop list than usual, and a few close friends to help us eat the harvest. We›re calling it the 'cooperative garden' this year because it will take a lot of cooperation to keep it going!" (esminson@gmail.com)

**Eduardo Oyanedel** (PhD '00) writes, "I am currently the director of the school of agriculture at Pontificia Universidad Catolica de Valparaiso (Chile), overseeing 20 professors, 100-plus staff and a growing number of research projects with industry and state funds. Over the next four years, I will have to lead the process of renovating our academic staff, as one-third of the professors will be retiring. In my role of director I am in charge of managing the budget, academic and non-academic staff, equipment, infrastructure, and all of the usual academic functions (admission, curriculum updates, planning, assessment/accreditation, etc.)." (eduardo.oyanedel@gmail.com)

**Tony Piazza** (BS '85) reports that he is living in Southhampton, New York. "I started Piazza Horticultural, a landscape design and installation company, in 1998. I visited Cornell in November 2011 while my son, Wyatt, was interviewing at the Hotel School. Very impressed by the changes. Had a great chat with Bill Miller at the Ken Post Lab. Couldn't believe that they are still using the same red stools in Ken Post. Love those industrial old beauties!" (tony@piazzahort.com)

From **Debra Rich** (PhD '07): "Well, I guess you could say I'm the one that got away. I mean, it's not like I'm doing anything with my degree at the present moment, except revising a 70-page review paper on the literature in my field that will hopefully be published late this year. If my professors knew what I was up to, here's my take on what they might say about my present circumstances: 'We had such great hopes for that one (sigh). I mean, she managed to negotiate meetings for a seven-person PhD committee! If she could do that, she could have easily have run a course for undergraduates! But no, no… she had to go run off and go back to organic farming for three years, and now look at her! Living the Pura Vida on a beach in western Costa Rica, baking bread and pastries for a retreat center, getting a tan, and relaxing! Of all jobs she could have had, baking?! What's that have to do with plants and human well-being?' (followed by lots of head shaking). Here's wishing everyone the pure life, whatever that may be for YOU! As for me, if I can grow it, cook it, bake it, and eat it, then I am truly living!" (deutz@earthlink.net)

**Jeremiah Smith** (BS '00) writes that he's currently an agriculture teacher at marcus Whitman High School in the Finger Lakes region in New York. "I live with my wife, son (3.5) and daughter (1.5) outside Geneva. At Marcus Whitman, I teach a course in floral and landscape design as well as animal science, wildlife conservation, engine repair and building construction. Since graduation, I have worked for Birdseye Vegetables and managed a private research farm for ACDS Research, Inc." (jesmith@mwcsd.org)

**Michelle (Buckstrup) Sutton** (MS '00) got married in 2010 and moved from Rochester to the Hudson Valley to be with her husband, Dale. She edits the city forestry magazine, *City Trees*, and writes about horticulture for *Upstate Gardener's Journal*, *Chronogram*, and *FarmHouse*. (michellesutton33@gmail.com)

**Michelle Sutton (MS '00) and her husband, Dale, at Thunder Road Gardens. Read her news on the next page.**

# ALUMNI NEWS FROM NEAR AND FAR

**Charles Ufford** (BS FOH '95) writes, "I recently moved from an apartment after 13 years there because the landlord wanted me to limit my tropical orchid collection! I am still employed as a section grower at a very large wholesale plant production greenhouse range, which used to be owned by Baker Greenhouses. We are now owned by Kurt Weiss Greenhouses of Center Moriches, Long Island, the third owner since I started in December 1998. I'm still a member of the Central NY Orchid Society and the Southern Tier Orchid Society (in Syracuse and Binghamton, respectively), and the Syracuse area club web address is www.cnyos.org. I often go out to visit and take pictures of native orchids around the state and area, and if anyone is interested at some point, they could contact me." (uffnet@surfbest.net)

**Jim Wargo** (MS Pomology 2000) checking in: "I have some good news to report. My wife, Lorena, gave birth to a healthy baby girl on October 9, 2011. Her name is Emily Elizabeth Wargo. She weighed in at 7 lb. 2 oz and was 20.5 inches long. She's seven months old now and is doing great. This is our first child. In other news, I work for Valent as a commercial development specialist in their biorational unit. My work focuses on developing both new and existing plant growth regulators (PGRs) for fruit, vegetable and row crops. My latest project involves developing a new PGR for stimulating grass growth in intensive rotational grazing systems for livestock operations delivering grass-fed meat and dairy products. I've been with Valent since February 2010. Prior to that, I worked for Georgia Pacific as a research agronomist in their specialty fertilizer division." (wargojim@hotmail.com)

**Charles Wasonga** (PhD '10) was the first recipient of the CAHA fellowship. He is currently a postdoctoral fellow with the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology in Mbita Point, Kenya. Students in the program complete their coursework at Cornell but conduct research primarily in Africa, where Wasonga undertook his field trials of the new heat tolerant and rust resistant green beans. Two years of trials in six sites was not without complications including one plot lost to porcupines, but resulted in the identification of very promising breeding lines with comparable yields at altitudes of 1100m and a combination of rust resistance genes protecting against all known races. Selecting heat tolerant snap beans for Africa from controlled-temperature greenhouses in upstate New York turned out to be a very effective approach. (cjw56@cornell.edu)

**Heinz Wutscher** (PhD '67) says that he occasionally goes to "Old Timers Meetings" put on by the Extension Service. "I do visit a former cooperator once in a while to see what goes on in the field and what's left of my experiments. Old age is upon me, physically and mentally. I can't see myself coming to Ithaca any time, but I always enjoy renewing contact with people in my past." (h.wutscher@att.net)

**Charles Wasonga (PhD '10) checking his plants in Africa.**

# *Department relaunches minor in horticulture*

After receiving a number of inquiries from Cornell students about a minor in horticulture, the department's teaching and curriculum committee decided to revise and relaunch the minor program in horticulture. Details were finalized in early April, and the new program requirements were sent to the CALS curriculum committee for approval. The teaching committee expects to announce the minor program in August when students return to campus for fall classes, and full details will be available on the department website later in the summer.

Students declaring a minor in horticulture will be expected to take a minimum of 15 credits in department coursework, with two courses--Frank Rossi's Horticultural Science & Systems (HORT 1101) and Taryn Bauerle's Nature of Plants (HORT 1115)--being required. Marty Petrovic will serve as faculty advisor for the minor. Students majoring in Plant Sciences will not be able to minor in horticulture.

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