



**HAMPTON ROADS AGRICULTURAL
RESEARCH AND EXTENSION CENTER
VIRGINIA TECH.**

Deep Roots

March 2025



Greetings From the Director

This March issue now completes the first full year for the HRAREC newsletter. I hope the information has been useful to you. As always, let me know of any ideas on what you would like to see in our newsletter.

I hope everyone came through ok from the snowfall February 19 and 20. We received about 12 inches of snow in our part of the city, resulting in the station being closed for three days. It had been a long time since Virginia Beach last saw a snowfall that size. But the daffodils have started blooming now , so spring is on its way.

The station again hosted the Virginia Turfgrass Council's Come to the Bay Turfgrass Conference from January 28-30, 2025. As we did last year, a tent had to be rented for Wednesday's Pesticide Recertification session as our classroom cannot hold the large group for that portion of Come to the Bay. I would like to thank

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Tom Tracy, Wes Bray, Craig Ziegler, and Chris Ziegler and our station's staff for their help in making this program a success, as well as all the speakers at the conference. Besides Come to the Bay, I also participated in the VTC Environmental Institute's beachgrass planting project at the Brock Environmental Center in Virginia Beach.

Water heaters for the sink and for irrigation were added to the ODU - HRAREC greenhouse at our station, and new gravel will be brought into the house soon for improved drainage. We have enjoyed hosting Darrin Duling from ODU on this greenhouse project. Hopefully work will start soon on our second new greenhouse. This new greenhouse will be used for

research by our Greenhouse Production Specialist Dr. Eric Stallknecht and will be situated on the east side of the glass house.

I would like to congratulate our administrative specialist Ms. Ava Borden for receiving the December 2024 Employee of Month Award from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Virginia Tech. For those that know Ava, you are aware of the great job she does managing our grant accounts, processing student assistantships, scheduling events in our classroom, ordering supplies for the station and many other tasks.

I would like to welcome Dr. Kristopher Criscione as our new Nursery Production Specialist. Kris earned his Ph.D. at Louisiana State University under Dr. Jeb Fields, a former graduate student at our station. He will conduct nursery industry research and share findings through his extension program. He started January 10, 2025, and his office is on the first floor.

Thank you to everyone who donated during Virginia Tech's Giving Day in February! These funds support the demonstration gardens at HRAREC, which rely entirely on donations. Dr. Laurie Fox will use them to enhance the gardens, benefiting schools, Master Gardener programs, garden clubs, and the public who visit for classes, programs, or tours. Master Gardeners and volunteers do an amazing job maintaining the gardens—plan a visit this spring to see their work!

Thank you for your support of our research station. Best wishes for the upcoming spring season.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeff Deen".

Updates



Welcome Dr. Kristopher Criscione

Since joining the station in January, nursery production specialist Dr. Criscione has been shaping his research and Extension efforts to address the needs of Virginia's nursery growers. From improving irrigation efficiency to exploring emerging technologies like AI-driven plant monitoring, he is committed to supporting the industry's growth. He promotes practical, science-based solutions to enhance efficiency. Criscione is eager to connect with nursery producers across the state and invites growers to reach out with challenges and ideas. Read more about his journey and plans for the industry.



[Full Article](#)



Updates

Come to the Bay

The Hampton Roads AREC, in partnership with the Virginia Turfgrass Council, proudly hosted Come to the Bay last week, bringing together industry experts, researchers, and professionals to explore the latest in turf management. Attendees participated in discussions on best practices, emerging research, sustainability efforts, and innovative solutions for maintaining healthy, high-quality turf. The event also provided a valuable networking opportunity, fostering collaboration and knowledge-sharing among professionals dedicated to advancing the industry. A huge thank you to all who joined us and contributed to the success of this engaging and informative event!



Happy Birthday Ed Borchers



Dr. Borchers celebrated his 100th birthday on March 1 with friends and family. His career began in 1956 as a plant breeder, focusing on improving broccoli, kale, and collards, including the still-popular 'Champion' Collard. As Director of the Virginia Beach and Painter research stations (1973-1991), he led the shift to ornamental and turf research and helped merge the Station with Virginia Tech in 1985. He retired as a Professor of Horticulture, leaving a lasting impact on the field.

Upcoming Events

Click  any event box for more information.



Saturday, 9am - 3pm and Sunday, 10am - 2pm

Master Gardener Spring Plant Sale

This event is the perfect opportunity to pick up a variety of plants for your garden, including unique flowers, vegetables, and herbs. All proceeds support local gardening programs and educational initiatives.

MAY

3-4

2025



Wednesday, 11am - 3pm

Berry Field Day

Get ready to explore the latest in berry production and food science. Attendees will have the opportunity to hear from experts, engage in hands-on demonstrations, and learn about new techniques and innovations to improve berry cultivation.

June

4

2025



Thursday, 7:30am - 4pm

Turfgrass Field Day

Join us for the 15th annual Turfgrass Field Day! This event will feature field tours, demonstrations, and expert-led sessions on topics ranging from pest management to sustainable practices. Learn, network, and discover the future of turfgrass management!

June

26

2025

Spotlights

Master Gardener

After retiring in 2014, Doug Shewbridge became a Master Gardener in 2015, drawn to the program after attending a turfgrass seminar. Since then, Doug has been an active and dedicated member, drawn to both the educational opportunities and the strong sense of community. As a tree steward, he frequently works with the arboretum and enjoys the hands-on aspect of gardening. He has also served as president of the association and has taught pruning classes for interns. Beyond leadership roles, Doug helps with plant propagation for the spring plant sale and coordinates partnerships for events. For Doug, Master Gardening is more than just horticulture—it's about learning, giving back, and connecting with others. Whether teaching, volunteering, or working alongside fellow gardeners, he enjoys every moment of being part of this vibrant community.



Doug

Staff

Congratulations to Ava Borden, our dedicated fiscal specialist at Hampton Roads AREC, for being named Employee of the Month at Virginia Tech! It's only suiting that we spotlight Ava, who plays a crucial role in managing financial operations, ensuring that budgets, grants, and expenditures are handled efficiently and accurately. Her attention to detail, problem-solving skills, and commitment to excellence make the whole office run smoothly. Ava has been with Virginia Tech for 12 years, and in that time she's seemed to learn a little bit about everything that goes on in the office. Her colleagues appreciate her professionalism and willingness to assist with any tasks at hand. Outside of work, Ava enjoys growing roses. We are incredibly grateful for her hard work and dedication. This recognition is well deserved! Please join us in celebrating Ava's outstanding achievement.



Ava



March 2025

WRAP UP

Dear supporters of the Hampton Roads AREC,

We are incredibly grateful for the generosity shown during Virginia Tech Giving Day! Thanks to 22 amazing donors, we raised \$2,375, which will be used to purchase needed supplies to maintain our demonstration gardens.

Your support didn't just make a difference- it put us on the map! We ranked #6 on the "Beat Your Best" leaderboard among all Virginia Tech programs, a testament to the strength of our community.

For those who weren't able to contribute this time, we've made it easy to give year-round to support the Demonstration Gardens. You can donate anytime through our dedicated link that takes you to a prefilled donation form, all you have to do is choose the amount.



Every gift, no matter the size, contributes to the future of innovation, education, and service. Thank you for being part of this success- we couldn't have done it without you! Go Hokies!

Sincerely,
The Hampton Roads AREC Family

Turf Tips

MARCH EDITION


Brought to you by Jeffrey Derr and Adam Nichols

As we transition from winter to spring, key turf management tasks include weed control, fertilization, and disease prevention.

Weed Control:

March is the ideal time to apply preemergence herbicides for crabgrass control. Crabgrass begins germinating when soil temperatures reach 50°F for several consecutive days, so early March applications are recommended. Effective preemergence herbicides for cool-season turf include dithiopyr (Dimension), pendimethalin (Pendulum), and prodiamine (Barricade). These products prevent crabgrass germination for about three months, with a split application strategy extending control through summer. These 3 herbicides can only be applied to established turf - see the full article on products for newly seeded lawns.

For warm-season turf, options include dithiopyr, pendimethalin, prodiamine, and indaziflam (Specticle). If winter damage is suspected, delay application to avoid inhibiting turf recovery. Commercial turf managers may use oxadiazon (Ronstar Flo) on dormant bermudagrass and zoysia. Postemergence broadleaf weed control includes three-way or four-way broadleaf herbicides (2,4-D, dicamba, MCPP, triclopyr) for tall fescue. Avoid triclopyr on bermudagrass. For warm-season turf, metsulfuron-methyl and products like Celsius Xtra offer broadleaf control.



This article is a summary. Click below to read the full article.

READ MORE

Fertilization:

Cool-season grasses may receive a light nitrogen application (0.5 lbs per 1,000 sq. ft.) in March, but most fertilization should occur in fall. For warm-season turf, wait until active growth before applying fertilizer.

Disease Management:

Scout for spring dead spot in warm-season grasses, marking affected areas for fall treatment. If conditions remain warm and wet, watch for large patch, which causes thinning areas with orange, yellow, or purple rings. Azoxystrobin (Heritage) can be applied when symptoms appear, followed by watering to ensure the fungicide reaches the root zone. A balanced fertility program will also help promote turf recovery and resilience.

DID YOU KNOW?



Welcome to Our Fun Facts Sheet

1

In the 1930s our research station (known at the time as Virginia Truck Experiment Station) introduced 'VATES Collard', a variety designed to thrive in the Virginia climate. Its compact, slow-bolting and sweetened flavor after frost made it a groundbreaking variety that is still cherished today.

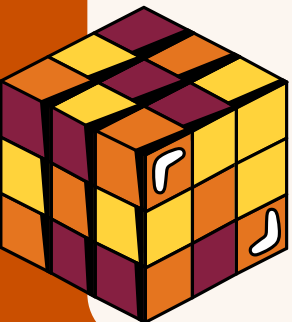
2

'Dwarf Blue Curled' Scotch Kale, developed by the station in 1950, was a game-changer in leafy greens. With unique, finely curled leaves and powerful nutritional benefits, this compact kale variety continues to be a go-to choice for a healthy boost in salads, soups, and stews.

3

The 'Chuck Hayes' Gardenia, released by the station in 1993, redefined cold-hardiness for gardenias. This innovative variety, with its stunning double flowers and robust fragrance, made it possible for gardenias to flourish in regions once deemed too cold for them.

VARIETY INNOVATION EDITION



Meet the Faculty



Dr. Jeffrey Derr
Director
Weed Scientist



Dr. Alejandro Del-Pozo
Entomologist



Dr. David Sample
Biological Systems Engineer



Dr. Laurie Fox
Horticulture Associate



Dr. Chuanxue Hong
Plant Pathologist



Dr. Eric Stallknecht
Greenhouse Specialist



Dr. Jayesh Samtani
Small Fruits Specialist



Dr. Kris Criscione
Nursery Production
Specialist

DIRECTORY

FACULTY	TITLE	EMAIL
Alejandro Del-Pozo	Entomologist	adelpozo@vt.edu
Jeffrey Derr	Station Director and Weed Scientist	jderr@vt.edu
Laurie Fox	Horticulture Associate	ljsmith@vt.edu
Chuanxue Hong	Plant Pathologist	chhong2@vt.edu
David Sample	Biological Systems Engineer	dsample@vt.edu
Jayesh Samtani	Small Fruits Specialist	jsamtani@vt.edu
Eric Stallknecht	Greenhouse Specialist	ericjs3@vt.edu
Kris Criscione	Production Specialist	kscriscione@vt.edu
STAFF	TITLE	EMAIL
Ava Borden	Administrative and Office Specialist	aborden@vt.edu
Julie Brindley	Entomology Research Specialist Senior	julie12@vt.edu
Colby Flanagan	Trades Technician	fcolby@vt.edu
Rob Holtz	Farm Manager	rholtz@vt.edu
Alana Martin	Communications Associate	alanak@vt.edu
Lelia Milner	Entomology Lab and Research Aid	milnerlk@vt.edu
Adam Nichols	Turf Research Manager	adnichol@vt.edu
Aman Rana	Lab Research Specialist	amanrana@vt.edu
Patricia Richardson	Research Senior Specialist	paricha2@vt.edu
Thomas Wilchynski	Mechanic	maxumsc@vt.edu



VIRGINIA AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION
HAMPTON ROADS AGRICULTURAL
RESEARCH AND EXTENSION CENTER
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