



HAMPTON ROADS AGRICULTURAL
RESEARCH AND EXTENSION CENTER
VIRGINIA TECH

Deep Roots

JUNE 2024



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Greetings From Our Director

This is the first issue of our research station's newsletter! We look forward to keeping you informed of the research and extension programs our faculty, staff, and students are conducting, as well as activities of the many master gardeners and other volunteers at our Center. Let me know what you would like to see in future issues of the HRAREC Newsletter.

First, let me introduce the newest members of our station. Dr. Eric Stallknecht, our Greenhouse Production Specialist, started his position August 10, 2023. Having a greenhouse production specialist at our station fits in well with our efforts to support the nursery and landscape industries. Eric and I have a USDA grant to build a greenhouse at the station, with matching financial

Greetings From Our Director

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support from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Virginia Tech. I am also working with Old Dominion University and Virginia Tech administration on a separate greenhouse project for our station.

A new faculty member will be joining us in January 2025, Mr. Kris Criscione. He is currently completing a Ph.D. at Louisiana State University and has accepted our offer to be the Nursery Production Specialist at HRAREC. We look forward to Kris starting his position here as that faculty position has been vacant for four years.

Mr. Colby Flanagan has assumed the position previously held by Mr. Greyson Dockiewicz, working under the direction of our Farm Manager Mr. Rob Holtz. Colby has been a great addition to the station. You probably know his dad, Mr. Roy Flanagan, who is the Agriculture Extension Agent for Virginia Beach.

Ms. Alana Martin, a 2023 Virginia Tech graduate (B.A. in Communications) was hired as our Social Media Coordinator. Hopefully you have seen some of the articles she has prepared on our programs. This much-needed position is shared between our station and the Eastern Shore AREC.

Our station hosted the “Come to the Bay Turfgrass Conference” January 23-25. Special thanks to Tom Tracy and the Virginia Turfgrass Council for co-sponsoring this event, and for the help and support provided by Agronomic Lawn Management, Land and Coates, and Lawns and Gardens Plus.

The master gardener volunteers at our station held a very successful plant sale May 4-5 at HRAREC. The Mid-Atlantic Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture held a training event at the station May 11. We hosted new Virginia Tech faculty for a tour on May 17. Dr. Jayesh Samtani hosted a Berry Field Day June 4 to show his strawberry and blackberry trials.

There will be an open house June 22 for our demonstration gardens. Our demonstration gardens are a special attraction at the station, and I appreciate all the volunteers who make the annual flower trials, the perennial gardens and the woody arboretum so successful. The turf group at our station (myself, Mr. Adam Nichols, and Dr. Alejandro Del-Pozo) will host the 14th Annual Turfgrass Field Day on June 27. The station will host part of the Virginia Nursery and Landscape Field Day July 25. The Fall Gardening Festival will be September 28.

I hope to see you at one of our events.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jeff Dew".

Updates

Master Gardener Plant Sale

25th Annual

The master gardener volunteers held their annual Spring Plant Sale. This was the most successful show yet, with over 1,700 people attending during this two-day event. They sold almost 1,000 vegetables, 1,000 herbs, and 67 different native plants species. Missed it? Don't be sad. The next one is in the fall!



Community Enhancement Award

Dr. Laurie Fox

The Garden Club of Norfolk (GCN) awarded Dr. Laurie Fox the Community Enhancement Award for her contributions to The Olmsted Initiative. Dr. Fox guided the GCN's visions for the Olmsted Tribute Garden to sustain native plant species and reduce flooding in our city.



[Full Article](#)



Berry Field Day



College of Agriculture and Life Science's Associate Dean, Dr. Mary Burrows, speaking at the Berry Field Day

Small Fruits Specialist at the Hampton Roads AREC, Dr. Jayesh Samtani, hosted his annual Berry Field Day. Stakeholders from all across Virginia visited the AREC to hear Samtani's trial summaries from this year. With over 30 attendees, this was his most success field day yet.

In addition to presenting his trial summaries, Samtani arranged for a number of presentations from industry experts, a trial field walk, and blackberry kombucha tasting.

[Trial Summary](#)



Updates

Research Monitoring Project

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences researchers at Virginia Tech are working on a six-year grant to investigate runoff quality and quantity downstream from utility-scale solar sites. The Principle Investigators for this project are Dr. David Sample from the Hampton Roads AREC along with Dr. Ryan Stewart and Dr. Lee Daniels from the School of Plant and Environmental Sciences. Intended to provide improved design guidance for solar power sites, researchers are working closely with the Department of Environmental Quality on this project.

[Full Story](#)



Graduation



Michael Harrison received his Master's Degree from the School of Crop and Soil Environmental Sciences this past Spring.

Harrison has been studying at the Hampton Roads AREC under Dr. Sample since 2020. He plans to continue his research at the station as a lab and field assistant.

We are immensely proud of him and excited to keep him around.

Tours

New Faculty

New faculty members from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences visited our Hampton Roads AREC to tour, network, and learn more about the fascinating projects our researchers are working on.

The day started in the classroom with a presentation before moving into the field where the faculty showcased their studies.



AREC Feature on 13News

Master Gardener, Sterling White, started volunteering at the Hampton Roads AREC in 2018. In honor of national volunteer month in April, 13News Now shared White's mission to give back and pay tribute to his late loved ones.

[Full Story](#)



Norfolk Academy

Students from Norfolk Academy's Farm to Table summer course visited our AREC to tour research fields, discuss the importance of organic and local food sourcing, and try some of the fruits we have harvested.



Updates



New Faculty

Dr. Eric Stallkneck

The Hampton Roads AREC welcomed Dr. Eric Stallkneck to the team as our first-ever greenhouse specialist. A recent Ph.D. graduate from Michigan State University, Stallkneck focuses his research on the optimization of plant growth through light manipulation.

[Full Article](#)



New Faculty

Kris Criscione

We are excited to announce our new Nursery and Production Specialist, Kris Criscione. Currently finishing his PH.D at LSU, he will be joining us at the start of 2025. His research has focused primarily on improving resource efficiency in nursery and greenhouse production. Stay tuned for more on Criscione in January.



Upcoming Events



[RSVP For All Three](#)



Saturday, 9am - 12pm

Garden Open House

Take a stroll through our gardens at the peak of the season. Enjoy refreshments and talk with volunteer gardeners as you explore our 28 different gardens and arboretums.

JUNE

22

2024



Thursday, 7:30am - 4pm

Turfgrass Field Day

This field day includes a tour of our plot, pesticide recertification, registered technician exam opportunity, and lunch.

June

27

2024



Thursday, Friday 8am - 3pm

Virginia Nursery and Landscape Field Day

The annual VNLA Field Day! Join industry professionals, educators, enthusiasts and exhibitors in Zone 8.

July

25

Spotlights

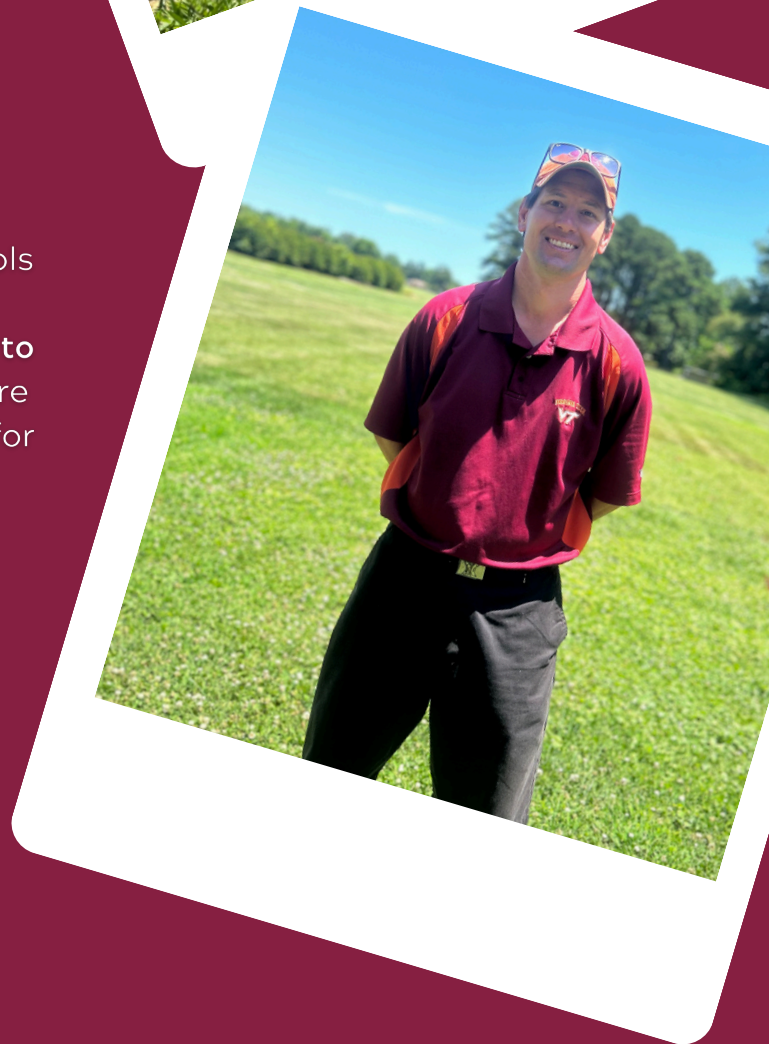
Master Gardener

At Jeanette Lynch's core lies her commitment to service and a deep love of nature. She grew up working on her family's farm in Nebraska. After dedicating 32 years as a nurse in the U.S. Navy, Jeanette embraced her new chapter at the Hampton Roads AREC. Using her GI Bill she pursued a Master's in Agriculture and Life Science, with a focus on soil and crops. Her passion for horticulture led her to become a Master Gardener in 2015. **"After 32 years caring for people I wanted to spend my next chapter caring for plants,"** Lynch said. She volunteers in the demonstration gardens in pursuit of educating people on the importance of planting with native species.



Staff

Adam Nichols is the Turf and Weed Research Manager working alongside Dr. Jeffrey Derr. Nichols became interested in agriculture in high school because he **"enjoyed the outdoors and was drawn to working outside."** He worked on a golf course where he took a special interest in how to properly care for the turf. He received his undergraduate in 2005 studying chemistry and his masters in 2008, studying Crop Soil and Environmental Science both from Virginia Tech. Nichols was on the Blacksburg campus when someone told him about the Hampton Roads AREC. His commitment to detail, diligence, and kind nature are qualities that advance our station.



Turf Tips

Brought to you by Jeffrey Derr and Adam Nichols

JUNE EDITION

Tall fescue

For those maintaining tall fescue, keep an eye out for brown patch disease. This fungus infects tall fescue especially under warm, humid conditions we see during the summer. Preventative applications of a fungicide containing azoxystrobin during the summer can help limit the amount of overseeding that may need to be done in the fall. Avoid frequent irrigation as this can create conditions for the disease to build up. Limit nitrogen applications during the summer. Most, if not all of your nitrogen should go down in the fall - September, October, November. If annual bluegrass (commonly called Poa) is a concern, one control option is to apply a crabgrass preventer, such as pendimethalin, dithiopyr, or prodiamine, in mid- to late-August, as annual bluegrass usually starts germinating in early September. The downside of applying a crabgrass preventer in August is that in most cases you will not be able to overseed, as these chemicals not only prevent successful germination of annual bluegrass, they also prevent establishment of tall fescue from seed. Decide which is more important - overseeding or applying a crabgrass situation. If the turf is thin, consider focusing on overseeding.

Warm-season grasses (bermudagrass, Zoysia, St. Augustine, Centipede)

Now is the time to fertilize since these grasses are actively growing during the summer months. It also is time for such cultural practices as dethatching and aeration. Move plugs to fill in bare spots. Bermuda grass, zoysia, and centipede can be seeded in June or July. A crabgrass preventer can be applied in August for annual bluegrass control in established warm-season grasses, but there are additional options later in the year. Do not apply a crabgrass preventer to newly seeded turfgrasses.

Both tall fescue and warm-season grasses

For both cool- and warm-season turf areas, keep an eye out for yellow nutsedge and kyllinga, two common perennial sedges in our area. Spot spray a chemical such as halosulfuron, sulfentrazone, or bentazon, among others, to sedge leaves for control. Apply a product containing quinclorac if you have crabgrass escapes in tall fescue, bermudagrass, or zoysia but do not apply a quinclorac product to St. Augustine or centipede. For broadleaf weeds, apply an amine formulation of a three-way broadleaf herbicide. Do not apply a triclopyr-containing product to bermudagrass. For St. Augustine, use a broadleaf herbicide for sensitive southern grasses.

Meet the Team

Faculty



Dr. Jeffrey Derr
Director
Professor of Weed Science



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

Meet the Team

Directory

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