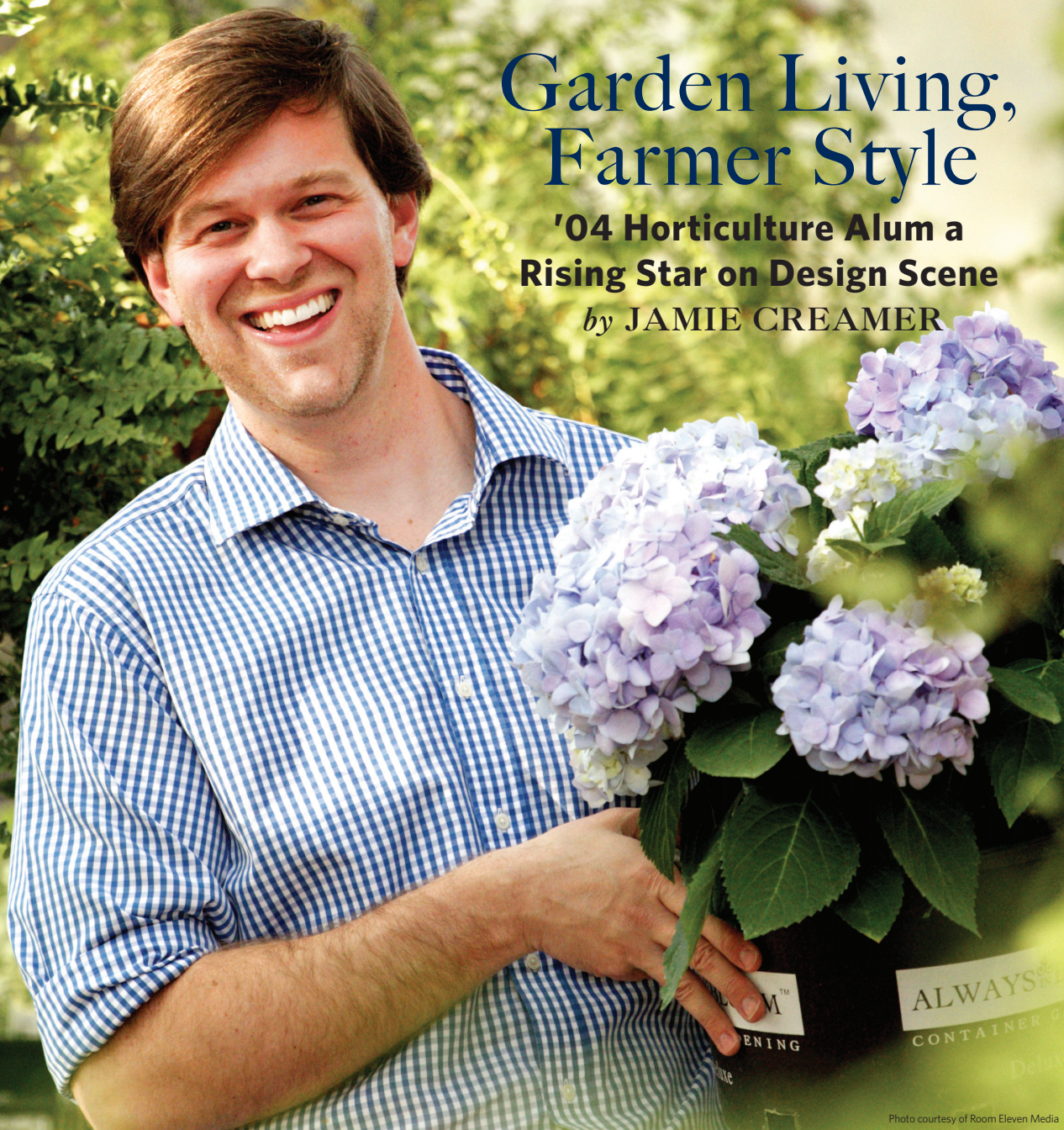


Garden Living, Farmer Style

'04 Horticulture Alum a
Rising Star on Design Scene

by JAMIE CREAMER



NOW AND THEN At left, College of Agriculture alumnus James T. Farmer III shows off what he considers a must for any Southern garden—the beloved hydrangea. As he notes in “A Time To Plant,” published in 2011, “Hydrangeas galore make a garden glorious.” Above, from horticulture professor Dave Williams’s 2003-04 photo archives, Farmer, then a senior in landscape design, plants flowers at Jordan-Hare Stadium.

Anyway, the magazine exposure, he says, is “what put me on the map.”

Farmer’s rapid and remarkable rise to success has come as no surprise to Auburn Department of Horticulture professor Harry Ponder. After all, it was Ponder, who also is the much-respected undergraduate job-placement coordinator for the horticulture department, who cast the deciding vote on Farmer’s professional future.

“For one of the very few times in my career, I suggested that James start a business right out of school,” Ponder says. “And, he has taken the ball and run with it.”

Born and bred an Auburn man—his maternal grandfather, Napp Granade, is a 1954 College of Ag alum—Farmer enrolled at Auburn in 2000 in the landscape architecture program, but that wasn’t a fit.

“It’s a great program, but it wasn’t plant-based,” he says. The Department of Horticulture’s landscape design major was, however, and, that, along with strong encouragement from family friend and Auburn horticulture professor Dave Williams, prompted Farmer to make the switch to ag.

“It was exactly what I was looking for,” Farmer says. “My classes were great, learning the science of small trees, shrubs, ornamentals, and the College of Ag—well, there’s just something about it. Everybody, students and teachers, they’re all your friends, your family.”

As a student, Farmer, an adept multitasker and an extrovert to the nth degree, didn’t hesitate to get involved at Auburn. In addition to his studies both in horticulture and his minor of art history, he was active in the Student Government Association, was an official Student Recruiter and

(continued on page 2)

JAMES T. FARMER III HAS BEEN billed as a gardening guru, a landscape designer, a floral artiste, an interior decorator, a design expert, a Southern chef and an event planner, and any and all of those introductions are apropos for the third-generation Auburn University graduate.

Since founding his James Farmer Designs in his native Kathleen, Ga., in 2005, the 30-year-old '04 College of Agriculture landscape design alumnus has built an impressive client list that stretches from central Alabama to the southern coast of South Carolina and up into the Tar Heel State, and he and his work have been featured frequently in regional magazines, including *Southern Living*, which, in December, named him an editor-at-large.

But wait; there’s more. He also has developed a loyal following on his allthingsfarmer.com blog and has appeared on any number of major-market television morning shows, most notably a segment with TV weatherman Al Roker on NBC’s “Today Show” last fall about transforming fruit, flowers and foliage from the garden into guest-wowing autumn tablescapes. We’re talking cored apples as votive holders, limes and pomegranate halves in the centerpiece, croton leaves as placemats and sweet potato soufflé served in orange halves.

“I’m all about weaving the garden and the goodness of the garden into your daily outdoor and indoor life,” says Farmer in his middle-Georgia drawl. “Garden living is my mantra.”

It’s also the subject of his first book, “A Time To Plant: Southern-Style Garden Living,” published in September 2011. With 250 photo-

graphs, “A Time To Plant” is a coffee-table book meets how-to manual meets Southern cookbook that offers practical, time-tested gardening wisdom Farmer absorbed growing up on a family farm with a garden, treasured garden-to-table recipes he more or less memorized cooking alongside his grandmother Mimi and innovative design, decorating and entertaining concepts built around what’s locally available at the time.

Books two and three, “Sip and Savor” and “Porch Living,” were released in April, and the energetic and gentlemanly Farmer hints more will be coming down the pike. His mission, he says, is

to teach a new generation of Southerners to love gardening and to make it a focal point of their lifestyles.

“My father is a doctor, so ours was more a hobby farm,” Farmer says. “And, no, we didn’t have peaches; we had cattle and pecans. But that kind of upbringing taught me so much about the land, and caring for the land, and gardening, and I

want to share that with the world.”

Even in his company’s early years, Farmer never wanted for business, but his big break came in mid-2008, when both *Southern Living* and *Traditional Home* magazines featured a historic Macon, Ga., garden that he had been instrumental in transforming.

“The garden had great structure, but the lady who owns the home is a family friend, and she called me because she said she needed somebody who was a designer and a gardener, not one or the other,” Farmer says. “A designer may say, ‘Put a boxwood here,’ but the gardener will say what type of boxwood. Everything’s got to gee-haw.”

“My classes were great, learning the science of small trees, shrubs, ornamentals, and the College of Ag—well, there’s just something about it. Everybody, students and teachers, they’re all your friends, your family.”

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View from AGhill

This spring, I spent some time trying to better understand the College of Agriculture's international partnerships and the positive impact that our scientists' collaborations with researchers from universities worldwide has on Alabama.

Looking back, we have tested and patented two kiwi fruit varieties — Golden Dragon and Golden Sunshine — through a partnership with Hubei Fruit and Tea Institute in Wuhan, China, and that same partnership has paved the way for the revival of Alabama's Satsuma industry. Several years ago, our researchers acquired lotus stock from China and introduced the aquatic plant to west Alabama farmers as a potential new crop opportunity.

We are currently exploring partnerships with international research organizations and universities that are focused on breeding drought-resistant peanuts. This would benefit nonirrigated peanut farmers in Alabama. We also are partnering with the Chinese Academy of Fishery Sciences to develop a microchip capable of rapidly sequencing fish genomes.

It is important that the College of Agriculture and the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station remain focused on ways to help our farmers increase production and efficiency. Since 2008, the AAES budget has shrunk 28 percent and the college's 15 percent. These cuts have led to a decrease in faculty and staff and elimination of most of the discretionary funds needed to conduct research for Alabama producers. The College of Agriculture's budget is 90 percent people, while the experiment station's is 73 percent people leaving little for operating our programs. As budgets get tighter, international partner-

(GARDEN LIVING, FARMER STYLE, from page 1)

served as a Camp War Eagle counselor, where, he admits, "I'd tell the students coming in, 'If you don't know what you want to do right now, go to the College of Ag; it's the place you want to be.'"

That the young Farmer was blessed with a mile-wide creative streak and an unusually strong sense of design was obvious early on to horticulture faculty, and even as a student, Farmer began to make a name for himself. He became a self-described "pot dealer," marketing his striking potted plant and flower arrangements to local garden club members, and as word about this amazingly talented horticulture student spread, he soon was "doing flowers" for various events, including his first-ever wedding reception. (Complete weddings and wedding receptions are now among James Farmer Designs' specialties.)

Too quickly, Farmer was a senior at Auburn, facing that sobering question of what, exactly, he should do after graduation. He knew what he wanted to do, and that was to go home to rural middle Georgia, to the small unincorporated town of Kathleen, and set up shop.

"There was a need in my area for a good designer, and my dream was to fill it," he says. "I kept thinking about this architect down in little ol' Moultrie (Ga.), and how people from Atlanta and all over Georgia would go to him to do their house plans, and I felt I could be that kind of landscape designer in Kathleen."

That called for a heart-to-heart talk with Ponder, which occurred, they both recall in detail, as they were walking back to Funchess Hall after one of Ponder's arboriculture labs in the Donald E. Davis Arboretum, discussing the pros and cons of a couple of highly promising job opportunities Farmer had,

ships help us leverage Alabama's investment in our research by partnering with scientists from around the world to solve agricultural problems in Alabama.

State-supported research funding is critical to the success of Alabama farmers. While the AAES budget was cut 3.8 percent this year, the Alabama Legislature, through the leadership of House Speaker Mike Hubbard and Sen. Tom Whatley, secured \$250,000 in funding for the National Poultry Technology Center. This center plays a critical role in teaching Alabama poultry farmers how to build better houses and save on utility costs. It is estimated that the technology and training provided by the center saved poultry farmers 3 cents per chicken. In 2011, that resulted in a \$30 million increase in profits for Alabama poultry producers. In years past, the state and federal governments have invested funds in precision farming projects at Auburn. We have developed an outstanding team of scientists that has helped farmers understand and adopt this technology. Alabama farmers recently estimated that precision agriculture adds in excess of \$20 million annually to their profits.

We recently used state funds to purchase a variable-rate irrigation system at the E.V. Smith Research Center for research into maximizing irrigation efficiency using this technology. The timing is good for this research, as the Alabama Legislature passed an irrigation incentive bill this year that will provide a tax credit for farmers who purchase irrigation equipment. Our research indicates widespread adoption of irrigation by Alabama farmers would have a tremendous impact on the state's economy. On Aug. 15, Auburn will host an Irrigation Summit in Montgomery to discuss the new legislation and the cost-benefits of irrigation. Please plan to join us for this event.



Bill Batchelor

DEAN, COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE
DIRECTOR, ALABAMA AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION

one with a prestigious company in Dallas, the other in Atlanta, and, of course, the pros and cons of starting his own business.

"Dr. Ponder really wanted me to interview with the Dallas company, and it would have been a great job—great pay, a company truck—but I remember just kind of rolling my eyes," Farmer says. "Then he told me that would be a dream job for 99 percent of the students graduating with me, but he said, 'James, you're the 1 percent.'"


It wasn't a flippant endorsement, Ponder says.

"For one thing, James had already gained valuable experience and contacts while working on the side and going to school," Ponder says. "Plus, James had such diverse interest and talents that no one job was going to offer him the diversity he wanted."

But there was another factor at play in Ponder's mind.

"I had another student very similar to James about 10 years before, and I encouraged him to work for experience and then start his own business," Ponder recalls. "He was never happy, and he never got the opportunity to start his own business. That episode weighed heavily on my advice to James."

"It's risky to start right out of school, but James had a vision of what he wanted to do, is blessed with extraordinary creative talent and has exceeded all expectations," he says. "He is a special talent who has found a special place in our industry. It helps that he is such a good person to begin with, and then you put the talent on top and that is a recipe for success."

For more about Farmer and James Farmer Designs, go to www.jamesfarmer.com. 

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Job Creation Chief Goal of Auburn's New Aquaculture, Fisheries Institute

by JAMIE CREAMER

A new research and outreach institute focused on stimulating economic growth in Alabama and the Southeast by strengthening and expanding the region's domestic aquatic and fisheries industries has been established within the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station under the leadership of Auburn University's Department of Fisheries and Allied Aquacultures.

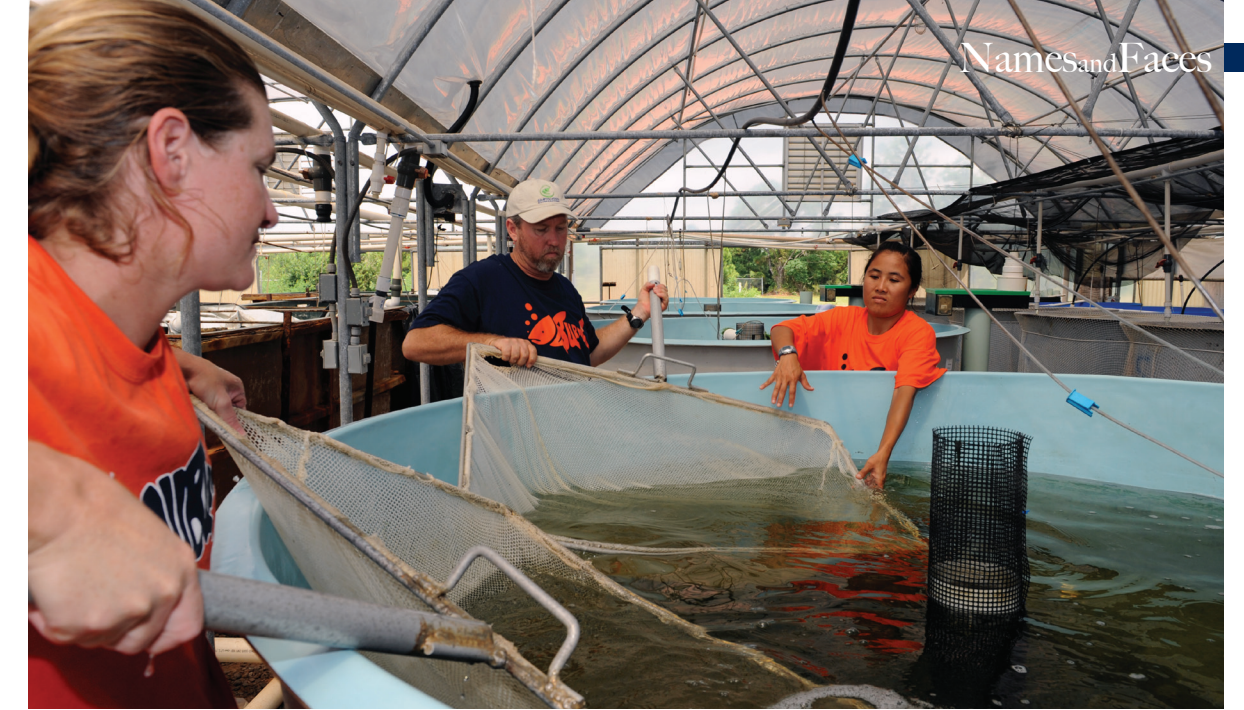
As approved by the university's Board of Trustees in February, the interdisciplinary Aquaculture and Fisheries Business Institute is charged with finding efficient solutions to the production, economic, quality, logistical and marketing problems standing between the region's aquatic enterprises—including freshwater, saltwater and recreational fisheries—and growth.

The ultimate goal: to encourage business development and create jobs in an industry currently battling a flood of foreign imports and soaring input and fuel costs.

Building on Auburn's unparalleled expertise in fisheries and the Southeast's existing aquaculture industry and abundant water resources, the institute will bring together experts in multiple disciplines from within the College of Agriculture and from five other colleges and schools on campus as well as from other universities and the private sector to tackle the needs and explore the opportunities that exist for aquaculture and fisheries businesses statewide and regionally.

The institute initially will be led by three fisheries and allied aquacultures faculty members at Auburn—professor emeritus John Jensen and associate professors and Extension specialists Jesse Chappell and Terry Hanson. They will serve as part-time co-directors until a permanent part-time director is found.

In essence, the new entity is an expansion of "Pond to Plate," a project the College of Agriculture's fisheries and allied aquacultures department, working with the Auburn Technical Assistance Center in the College of Business, initiated in 2009 to improve the efficiency and profitability of Alabama's catfish industry by reducing waste at every level of the value stream. The project has hinged on the application of "lean manufacturing" strategies to the entire catfish industry. Lean manufacturing, a management philosophy developed by Japan's automotive



NETTING GROWTH The AAES' Aquaculture and Fisheries Business Institute will work to make freshwater, saltwater and recreational aquatic enterprises in Alabama and the Southeast more profitable.

industry, takes a big-picture view of the entire process of moving a product from the producer to the customer and cuts any steps and activities that are unnecessary to the process.

"Lean manufacturing is about eliminating waste to reduce costs, improve quality and deliver to consumers the products they want at competitive prices, all with minimal environmental impact," Jensen says. "It's the pursuit of perfection."

That Pond to Plate is making a difference can be found in the growing number of producers who are adopting in-pond raceway production systems, which offer such advantages as higher stocking densities and better inventory control, and who are transitioning from channel catfish to AU Hybrid, a fast-growing, feed-efficient and disease-resistant catfish Auburn researchers released in 2005.

Pond to Plate also has led to significant grant and contract awards since its inception, and David Rouse, Department of Fisheries and Allied Aquacultures head, expects that to continue through the institute.

"Our department has always worked with the state's aquaculture and seafood industries, but traditionally, we focused on specific problems," Rouse says. "In recent years, we came to realize that the issues were complex and that we needed to take a much broader view and build teams of individuals with diverse backgrounds to address those issues."

"The result was Pond to Plate, which is having such positive impacts on our catfish industry that we're ready to apply the same principles to related industries in our state and region," he says. "Auburn's Aquaculture and Fisheries Business Institute will give us this opportunity."

The Alabama Ag Experiment Station is funding the institute for its first three years, during which the three co-directors will focus on securing backing from private clients, commodity groups, stakeholders and state and federal research and education programs so the institute ultimately will be supported 100 percent by extramural dollars.

Board OKs Hunger Institute within AAES

Auburn University has taken its role in the war on hunger to a new level with the creation of the International Hunger Institute within the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station. As approved by the university's Board of Trustees in February, the institute will be funded by the AAES for three years and then will rely totally on extramural support.

The center was proposed by the College of Human Sciences, one of five colleges and schools at Auburn affiliated with the AAES. In 2004, the college, partnering with the United Nations World Food Programme, spearheaded the establishment of a university-wide War on Hunger campaign, an effort that led to the creation of Universities Fighting World Hunger, an international movement that now involves 200-plus universities worldwide.

June Henton, human sciences dean, will lead the institute until funding is acquired to hire permanent staff.



PRECISION IRRIGATION State Sen. Tom Whatley, chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, helped cut the ribbon in May on a new \$157,000 variable-rate irrigation system recently installed at the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station's E.V. Smith Research Center Plant Breeding Unit near Tallassee. The state-of-the-art pivot system will allow AAES researchers to study the use of irrigation on a variety of crops, which will help Alabama farmers use irrigation water wisely while also increasing crop yields. Participating at the ribbon cutting were, from left, Jim Bannon, director of outlying units for the AAES; Sid Cameron, territory manager with Valley Irrigation, the company that designed and manufactures the new system being used at EVSRC; AAES Director and College of Agriculture Dean William Batchelor; Whatley; Greg Pate, director of EVSRC; and Blake Reid, field technician with Reid Brothers Irrigation and Equipment Company, who installed the new system at EVSRC. Whatley, R-Auburn, was one of several legislators who supported a new bill, which was signed into law May 14, that provides farmers income tax credits on the purchase and installation of irrigation systems. That bill marks the beginning of a major push to increase the use of irrigation on Alabama crops. An Irrigation Summit, designed to get feedback from farmers and others on the barriers to irrigation adoption in Alabama, will be held Aug. 15 at the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries Richard Beard Building in Montgomery. For more information and to register visit www.aces.edu/water/conf/2012.

Spotlight

From Auburn to Africa

Emily Brennan Mapping Her Own Future

by STEPHANIE HAMILTON

In early May, Emily Brennan proudly represented Auburn University's College of Agriculture as graduation marshal. Shortly thereafter, the animal sciences alumna boarded a plane that took her 8,141 miles away from Auburn for a six-month internship in Nairobi, Kenya. By this fall, she will be back in the United States—at Emory University in Atlanta, to be exact—to begin graduate school in public health and nutrition.

The path Brennan is blazing for herself is certainly taking her all over the map, literally and figuratively, but that is nothing new for this engaged and engaging young woman. In fact, being brave enough to go off her original path was the first step in the journey.

As a college freshman, the Jacksonville, Fla., native left her family to enroll at Auburn, drawn here for its renowned College of Veterinary Medicine.

Throughout her years at Auburn, Brennan not only excelled in her classes but also embraced the whole Auburn experience, serving as parent coordinator and president of the Auburn University rowing team, president of the college's Ag Ambassadors and student editor of Auburn University Journal of Undergraduate Scholarship, an undergraduate research journal for the university. She also assisted in molecular biology research for the College of Sciences and Mathematics through Auburn's Undergraduate Research Fellowship program and was one of only two students who represented Auburn on an agricultural exchange tour to Taiwan in the summer of 2010.

She also received numerous honors and awards during her college career, including the Goldwater Scholarship for engineering, math or science students; The President's Award for the College of Agriculture; induction into several honoraries; and, of course, serving as graduation marshal for the spring 2012 commencement ceremonies. As the first undergraduate student to complete a College of Veterinary Medicine minor in public health, she was also featured on the cover and in an article for the Winter 2012 issue of Auburn Veterinarian, a publication produced by Auburn's veterinary college.

All the while Brennan also held a part-time job, was very involved with her church and trained for marathons but also enjoyed spending what little down time she had with her sister, Katie—who was her roommate and a fellow student here at Auburn—and their 14-pound cat, Jackson.

That may seem like the life of someone absolutely sure of the path she was taking. For several years it seemed that way to Brennan, too, who had chosen to major in animal sciences on the way to becoming a veterinarian. Everything was smooth sailing until, as junior, Brennan experienced a year of multiple difficult courses, little sleep and, after working at a veterinary clinic, the realization that vet school was not the right path for her to take.

"One mistake that I made during my college career was not being able to change my mind," Brennan says. "I had a plan, but I didn't want to steer away from it even though I knew it wasn't the right thing for me."

After months of sleep deprivation, studying and soul searching, Brennan finally accepted the fact that her heart was not in a career as a veterinarian. Her heart was, however, in the field of public health and nutrition, a program that ties in closely with agriculture but that also appealed to Brennan's desire to make a difference in the world.

This course of study and her interest in helping on an international level in developing countries are what led her to Kenya.

There, she is working with the Makina Community Development Project, or Macodep, a nonprofit organization headquartered in the town of Kibera, home to more than a million people, many of whom live in conditions of poor sanitation, minimal amounts of clean water and limited healthcare.

Macodep focuses on improving the overall welfare of local people by offering services such as laboratory testing, home-based AIDS/HIV care and finding homes for orphaned children. Brennan's role is to help women farmers there improve herd health in cattle, which ultimately can improve the economic and nutritional status of the community.

No doubt Brennan's summer will be full of experiences that take her down many new paths, but she is headed into the world feeling prepared.




SETTING HER PATH Recent College of Agriculture graduate Emily Brennan, whose ability to mix academic excellence, committed involvement and unerring enthusiasm made her an award winning student, has taken her talents to Africa this summer as she maps out a course for her future.

Her experience at Auburn—from the opportunities she had to walk into any office on Ag Hill and talk to her professors about topics other than class to the many responsibilities she took on and learned from—had a profound impact on Brennan.

"Auburn shaped me, and it was really sad to leave," she says. "I know everyone says the same thing, but it is so true."

And before she left Auburn, Brennan had a bit of advice for current and future students.

"Think big, and don't be defined by what other people do," she says. "You can change your mind," she adds. "It's OK to do that. Find what you love, and find a way to get there and do it." 

College Announcements

New Ag Ambassadors Named

The following students were recently selected as new ambassadors for the College of Agriculture. **Ashley Crenshaw**, a freshman in animal sciences from Huntsville; **Autumn Brown**, a freshman in animal sciences from Pendleton, Ind.; **Darcey Haggan**, a sophomore in animal sciences from Clanton; **Hannah Patterson**, a junior in agricultural communications from Butler, Md.; **John Bland**, a senior in agronomy and soils/horticulture from Florence; **Jordan Toombs**, a junior in agronomy and soils from Columbia, Tenn.; **Joy Waldrop**, a

sophomore in animal sciences from Hoover; **Katharyn Brennan**, a junior in animal sciences from Jacksonville, Fla.; **Lizzie Handlin**, a sophomore in animal sciences from Birmingham; **McCamy Pruitt**, a junior in agronomy and soils from Augusta, Ga.; **Meghan Sparkman**, a senior in animal sciences from Huntsville; **Riley Shugg**, a freshman in animal sciences from Palm Coast, Fla.; **Sarah Foster**, a junior in animal sciences from New London, N.C.; **Sonja Cox**, a freshman in animal sciences from Huntsville; and **Stephanie Perkins**, a senior in animal sciences from Hickory, N.C.

Faculty Promotions

Six College of Agriculture faculty members were awarded promotion,

tenure or both at Auburn University for 2012. **Henry Fadamiro** in entomology and plant pathology, **Oladiran Fasina** in biosystems engineering and **Tung-Shi Huang** in poultry science achieved full professor status. Horticulture's **Glenn Fain**, **David Held** in entomology and plant pathology and **Betsy Wagner**, professor of animal sciences, were promoted to associate professor with tenure.

2012 Retirements

Several College of Agriculture and Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station employees have retired or soon will retire.

Kenneth Tilt, professor of horticulture, and Ted Tyson, professor

of biosystems engineering, retired effective Jan. 31. **Wendy Seesock**, research associate in fisheries and allied aquacultures, retired Feb. 29. **William "Billy" Dozier**, professor of horticulture, and **Jorge Mosjidis**, professor of agronomy and soils, retired on April 30. **Mike Williams**, professor of entomology and plant pathology, retired May 15. **Lane Sausser**, chief financial officer for the College of Agriculture and Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station business office, will retire June 30.

Best wishes to them all and many thanks for their years of service and dedication.

Successful Play

Golfers, anglers and marksmen from across the state helped make the College of Agriculture's 15th Annual Ag Classic a huge success.

This year's event, held May 2 and 3, drew some 150 participants, who won prizes and had a chance to reconnect with old friends. It continued a tradition that debuted in 1997 as an event to bring College of Ag alumni and supporters to town for fun and fellowship and, in the years since, has become one of the college's strongest traditions.

While totals from the event were not available at press time, proceeds will go to the College of Agriculture's unrestricted fund, which significantly helps support areas of greatest need in the college, such as scholarships, recruitment programs and technology and equipment upgrades.

To see photos from the 2012 Ag Classic, go to www.ag.auburn.edu/development/agclassic/.



Cordie Taking Education Even Further as New College of Ag Distance Education Coordinator



Leslie Cordie

Learning is a lifelong process, but for those already in the workforce furthering a formal education can be a challenge. However, thanks to the College of Agriculture's distance education program and a new and dynamic employee dedicated to distance learning, options are expanding for anyone interested in graduate and certificate programs related to agriculture and environmental sciences.

That employee—Leslie Cordie—began work in February as the college's new distance education coordinator, taking the lead to build on the College of Agriculture's distance learning options that began through the visionary leadership of the Department of Agronomy and Soils and one of its professors.

"The Department of Agronomy and Soils and Dennis Shannon (professor of agronomy and soils) were very forward thinking in developing the college's distance education program," Cordie says, noting that distance education classes were first taught through the departments of entomology and plant pathology and poultry science, but Shannon laid the groundwork for the first distance education program in agriculture at Auburn, quickly getting the program approved through the Accreditation Council for Higher Education.

The college's distance learning program is designed to give professionals in such fields as agriculture, environmental management, landscape and construction, turfgrass and golf course

management and agribusiness and those with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, the Natural Resources Conservation Service and other state and federal agencies the opportunity to take classes and earn advanced degrees while working.

The program already provides professionals several online opportunities to earn either advanced degrees in agronomy and soils or academic and continuing education credits in soil and crop sciences, entomology, plant pathology and poultry science.

Cordie, who has a two-year appointment in this new position, is already making great strides in marketing and building the program further. A native of Wisconsin, Cordie brings to the college more than 20 years of experience in higher education, technical communication, program development and evaluation and strategic planning.

She earned her bachelor of science in nursing from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and her MBA from the University of Texas-Austin, then, as a military spouse, put her talents to work teaching business and management classes for the University of Maryland Asian Division Japan when the family was stationed in Asia during the 1990s.

It was during those years of military life that Cordie saw firsthand the value of distance education for members of the military or, for that matter, anyone without access to a "bricks and mortar" campus.

"The idea of distance education (also called correspondence education in its early years) really took off around 1995 when the Internet started," she says. "The Web offered another way to provide access to education for members of the military stationed in remote areas."

Recognizing the possibilities of using technology for educational improvement, Cordie embraced the use of the Web to teach and to help with faculty development and, in the process, found that she loved it.

When she and her family returned to the States in 1999, Cordie began working in positions that combined her teaching and educational assessment skills with information technology skills, which led her to pursue an interdisciplinary doctorate at Colorado State in adult education and technical communication.

That degree in hand and after several years of working in a variety of capacities that tapped into her unique skills set, Cordie came to Auburn in 2008 as a distance learning specialist where she met Shannon and others on campus working to build the university's distance education program. She left Auburn for a couple of years to work as a curriculum policy coordinator for Auburn's Air University, but jumped at the chance to come back to the College of Agriculture and is excited about the college's potential.

Cordie does not see distance education as a replacement for a traditional on-campus education, but she does see it as a way to leverage the exceptional expertise and talent of faculty here who are interested in expanding into distance education models.

"I really hit the ground running when I got here in February and I feel good about the program and the strides we have already made," she says.

Among those accomplishments is a new graduate degree in soil, water and environmental science through the Agricultural Interactive Distance Education Alliance, or Ag*IDEA, a consortium of distinguished universities that includes not only Auburn but Clemson, North Carolina State and Texas Tech universities and the universities of Georgia and Kentucky.

The college's distance education program is also expanding its offerings this fall to include two new weed science courses, and a new online master's degree in soil, water and environmental sciences will be available soon, pending final approval by the university and its accrediting agency.

By fall semester 2013, the distance learning lineup also will include professional programs in turfgrass management, horticulture and animal sciences as well as an interdisciplinary master's degree in agricultural education, Cordie says.

"Dr. Cordie's background and experience give her the ability to see the big picture while understanding all the different aspects of the job," says Shannon. "She is in my view the best of the best and uniquely qualified for the position she holds."

In Cordie's view, the potential for this program is exceptional and she is looking forward to building it further. "I wake up every morning looking forward to coming to work," she says.

To learn more about opportunities with Auburn's College of Agriculture distance education programs, visit www.ag.auburn.edu/distanceeducation/ or contact Cordie at lak0007 or 334-844-8718.

Relevant Research

Models for Health

Corpulent, Wooly Pig Possible Key to Human Disease Prevention

by JAMIE CREAMER

A curly-haired, morbidly obese, genetically primitive breed of Hungarian pig that until recently was on the brink of extinction could be key to the eventual prevention of diabetes and heart disease in humans, Auburn University researchers contend.

The breed is the Mangalitsa, and two years after importing the initial group of piglets from their native land to the Auburn University Swine Research and Education Center, Auburn animal scientist Terry Brandebourg has determined that as the commonly called “wooly” pigs pack on layers of adipose tissue, they spontaneously develop symptoms of metabolic syndrome similar to those that obese humans develop, including insulin resistance, liver dysfunction and inflamed adipose tissue.

That discovery could become as huge as the Mangalitsa is fat, leading to the development of therapies that will not only treat but prevent diabetes and associated health conditions.

“We know that obesity is linked to diabetes and diabetic heart disease, but we haven’t fully understood the mechanisms underlying those links because there hasn’t been a suitable translational animal model that allows us to observe how increasing adiposity induces these health conditions,” Brandebourg says. “But our initial experiments using the Mangalitsa indicate that as they amass body fat, their systems mimic obesity-related metabolic problems that we see in people.”

With their data thus far supporting the genetically corpulent Mangalitsa’s potential as the much-needed novel model, Brandebourg and research collaborator Rajesh Amin in the Harrison School of Pharmacy have begun using the magnetic resonance imaging scanner at Auburn’s MRI Research Center to image the wooly pigs’ cardiac functions, in an effort to study how obesity affects heart health.

Funded by an Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station grant they were awarded last fall, the scientists also are supplementing the animals’ diets with conjugated linoleic acids, or CLAs, a group of naturally occurring fatty acids that has exhibited anti-inflammatory, anti-atherosclerotic and anti-diabetic effects in studies with mice.

“We’re looking at the potential of CLAs to uncouple metabolic and heart dysfunctions from obesity,” Brandebourg says. “What if reducing the risk for diabetic heart disease turns out to be as simple as taking CLA supplements?”

Brandebourg says Brian Anderson, who manages the Swine Research and Education Center and is responsible for the day-to-day care of the animals there, is a key player in the wooly-pigs project, as are several graduate and undergraduate students who are actively involved in the study. One of the undergrad researchers, Auburn senior Christine Garrett, presented the



data establishing the Mangalitsa as a metabolic model for diabetes during the fifth annual Boshell Diabetes Research Conference, held earlier this year in Auburn.

The use of swine as animal research models for certain human medical conditions is widely accepted because, as a species, pigs are both physiologically and metabolically similar to humans. But in lab trials, scientists have not yet identified a domestic breed that faithfully models the natural progression of diabetes as carcass fat increases without additional experimental intervention. That’s what inspired Brandebourg to search for the most obese, rudimentary breed on the planet, and that led him to the Mangalitsa.

In Hungary, the breed is called Mangalica, which means “hog with lots of lard,” and that is quite an understatement. The carcass of a mature Mangalitsa is 70 percent fat, and the fatback is three times thicker than that found on today’s leaner breeds, such as the muscular, industry-standard Yorkshire pig.

Mangalitsa pigs, descendants of wild boars and lard pigs, emerged in Eastern Europe in the mid-19th century and were prized for their light and clean-tasting lard and succulent texture and flavor, but demand for Mangalitsa products waned after World War II, given the advent of lard alternatives and the trend toward fast-growing, lean pork.

What goes around comes around, however, and today, chefs at five-star restaurants on the East and West coasts increasingly are discovering that meat harvested from the Mangalitsa is more highly marbled, is of superior color and is significantly tenderer than that from Yorkshire hogs and are paying premium prices for dry-cured Mangalitsa meat.

Thus, while still primarily focused on the Mangalitsa’s promise as a translational animal research model for human diseases, Brandebourg also is collaborating with fellow Auburn meat scientist Christy Bratcher to investigate the breed’s potential as a quality food animal. Their initial data indicate that Mangalitsa meat is considerably higher in monounsaturated, or “good,” fatty acids and lower in undesirable saturated fats than pork from Yorkshire hogs, factors that suggest Mangalitsa meat is healthier to consume, Brandebourg says. **CS**

A WOOLY BREED Animal sciences graduate research associate Kimberly Fisher checks up on two Mangalitsa pigs that are part of a research project animal scientist Terry Brandebourg is conducting at Auburn’s Swine Research and Education Center. Mangalitsa pigs, known as wooly pigs because of their coarse and curly hair, are an extremely obese breed. The carcass of a Mangalitsa is 70 percent fat.

College Students Gain More Than Knowledge While Pursuing Degrees

by JAMIE CREAMER

An Auburn University study that tracked changes in male and female college students’ weight, size, shape and body composition not just as freshmen but over the course of their four-year college careers indicates that students are heavier and, yes, fatter when they graduate than they were when they first arrived on campus. And that’s true more so for the male student body than the female.

Results from the in-depth research project that ultimately followed 89 females and 42 males from their first semester on campus in August 2007 to their last in May 2011 showed seven out of every 10 students participating in the study gained weight—an average of 13 pounds for males and 3.7 pounds for females—on their journey to a bachelor’s degree.

More telling, however, were the changes in body fat percentages, which revealed that the average weight-gaining student in the four-year study had 4.7 percent more fat tissue as a graduating senior than he or she had as an incoming freshman. Body fat percentages increase not only with gain of fat tissue but also with the loss of lean muscle mass, so, although females in the study gained only 3.7 pounds on the scales, they had 8.5 more pounds of fat in the body at the study’s end. For males, the higher body fat percentage translated into 11.1 pounds of fat.

“Most of the handful of studies that have been done on college weight gain have focused only on female students,” says Auburn nutrition professor Sareen Gropper, who, with consumer affairs professor Lenda Jo Connell, led the team of Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station scientists involved in the longitudinal experiment. “But from our data, the gains in weight and body fat suggest increased health risks for many college males.”

The same could be said for the changes in participants’ physiques over the four years. Using 3-D body scanning technology housed in Auburn’s College of Human Sciences, the research team, which also included consumer affairs faculty Karla Simmons and Pam Ulrich, was able to track where those who gained weight were gaining it. The body scan images revealed that, for male weight-gainers, the extra pounds were most likely to show up in their waists and, for females, in their thighs and seats. The waist is considered the unhealthiest place to add fat.

Males also had a more significant increase in body mass index, which is calculated based on height and weight. For males, the average BMI increase was 1.8 kilograms per meter squared, compared to 0.6 in females.

In the study’s first year, the Auburn researchers did examine the Freshman 15 phenomenon—in which they found that first-year college students



A WEIGHTY ISSUE In a four-year study at Auburn, researchers found the average college student weighed more and had a higher percentage of body fat as a graduating senior than he or she had as an incoming freshman.

terms of body changes, whether they would lose the weight they’d gained in the school year over the summer—a broad range of factors,” Connell says.

In that freshman year, for instance, students who resided on campus gained more weight and body fat than those who lived off campus, but Connell says the choice of dining options may have contributed to that.

“At that time, the campus dining halls had all-you-can-eat night, and some freshmen may have made the most of that,” she says. “And, most of those on campus tended to eat with several people at each meal, and our findings indicate that those who usually ate with two or more friends gained more weight and fat.”

Initially, 240 freshmen—156 females and 84 males—signed up for the study, which required them to report for data collection three specific times in their freshman and sophomore years and at the beginnings and ends of their final two years. Students did receive stipends over the course of the project, and for many of them, money was their key motivation for sticking with the study, Gropper said.

Though 45.5 percent of the original participants dropped out along the way due to such factors as transfers, early graduations, academic suspensions, pregnancies, marriages and broken legs, Connell says the 54.5 percent retention rate from start to finish was outstanding and yielded a wealth of scientifically sound information that can be used in structuring intervention and educational programs for college students.

“Note that 30 percent of the students in the study did not gain any weight while they were in college, and in fact, the females who reported doing strength training consistently actually lost weight and lost body fat,” she says.

Auburn Scientists Discover Tar Balls Harbor Potentially Deadly Human Pathogen

by JAMIE CREAMER

The April 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico and the waves of tar balls deposited on the beaches shortly thereafter prompted the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to produce a tar ball fact sheet. Among the factoids was one stating that those sticky, coin-sized clumps of weathered oil, though unsightly and annoying, are not a human health hazard.

But new research findings out of Auburn University indicate that tar balls—all tar balls; not just those linked to the BP oil spill—are reservoirs for a multitude of bacteria, including at least one pathogen that can cause life-threatening sickness in humans.

WHAT IN TARNATION Tar balls that marred Alabama and Mississippi beaches in the months following the April 2010 BP oil spill prompted an Auburn University research project in which scientists discovered that the sticky blobs of weathered oil harbor *Vibrio vulnificus*, the same pathogen that causes some people who eat raw oysters to become deathly ill.

The pathogen is *Vibrio vulnificus*, a naturally occurring bacterium that thrives in warm seawater, is absorbed by filter-feeding oysters and is most often associated with severe illness and death in individuals with certain medical conditions, such as liver disease or cancer, who eat raw oysters. As such, *V. vulnificus* infection is the leading cause of death related to seafood consumption in the United States.

Especially among those at-risk populations, however, exposure to the bacterium through a wound can lead to tissue-killing, potentially fatal infections, and it is in that context, Auburn aquatic microbiologist and study leader Cova Arias says the discovery of high numbers of *V. vulnificus* in tar balls has “clear public health implications.”

“Tar balls are sticky, especially during the warmer months, and they are difficult to remove,” the Department of Fisheries and Allied Aquacultures

associate professor says. “If a tar ball contacts a skin abrasion, it could vector *V. vulnificus* and cause severe wound infections that may lead to death. People whose immune systems are compromised should be fully aware of the risks and go out of their way to avoid any contact with tar balls.”

That tar balls along the Alabama and Mississippi coasts harboring high levels of *V. vulnificus* was an unexpected finding in a post-oil spill study originally designed to monitor total bacterial counts in tar balls that washed ashore from Dauphin Island to Gulfport, Miss., in the weeks and months following the BP disaster.

“We already had the *V. vulnificus* methodology set up in our lab, so it made sense to analyze the tar balls for the pathogen,” says Arias, for whom a major research focus is food safety in oysters and the development of post-harvest techniques and processes that significantly reduce *V. vulnificus* counts in the bivalve mollusks.

At each location where they gathered—and continue to gather—tar balls, Arias and collaborators Ash Bullard, a marine parasitologist and Auburn fisheries assistant professor, and graduate research assistant Zhen Tao also collected sand and seawater samples and, in their analyses, found that the total bacterial counts and the number of *V. vulnificus* bacteria in tar balls up and down the Gulf coast were significantly higher than in the sand and seawater samples collected from the same sites.

Though, based on their volume and when they began to appear, the small wads of tar the scientists collected from along the Gulf beaches likely were from the BP oil spill, tests to officially make that determination were cost-prohibitive. But Arias says the source of tar balls is inconsequential to the study.

“We believe our findings apply to tar balls regardless of their origin,” she says. “It doesn’t matter where the weathered oil in tar balls comes from. What matters is that people be aware that tar balls can be hazardous to their health and that the more tar balls you encounter, the higher the risk.”

New Alfa Administration Building Opens at TVREC

A new, 4,000-square-foot administrative building made possible by a \$1 million donation from the Alabama Farmers Federation officially opened for business at the Tennessee Valley Research and Extension Center in Belle Mina during an April 6 ribbon-cutting ceremony, with those participating in the dedication of the Alabama Farmers Federation Administrative Building calling the facility a major asset to area farmers, TVREC personnel, agricultural researchers and local citizens.

“The center houses both research and Extension personnel, which allows us to do timely research and deliver that information to our growers to help them be more productive and efficient every day, every year,” said Chet Norris, TVREC director. “This new building will help us continue to serve area farmers and also provide a place where those farmers and others in the community can come together and share information and needs.”

The administrative facility includes 12 offices,

an administrative lobby area and a small conference room with video-conferencing capabilities.

Alabama Farmers Federation and Alfa Insurance Companies President Jerry Newby pledged the \$1 million for construction of the much-needed administrative building in 2007, saying that renovations and upgrades at the TVREC would benefit Alabama farmers both now and in the future, and he emphasized that point again in remarks at the grand-opening event.

“The research center at Belle Mina has been serving the farmers of Alabama for more than 80 years,” Newby said. “The work that has been done here has been vitally important to the health of the agricultural community in the Tennessee Valley. The addition of this facility will help sustain agriculture in this area and throughout the state as this center continues its mission to improve the profitability of farmers.”

The 755-acre Tennessee Valley Research and Extension Center, one of 15 Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station research stations across the

state, was established in Belle Mina in 1927 to help area farmers increase their profitability. The center is nationally recognized for its cotton research program and is also home to research on precision agriculture and irrigation, livestock, soybeans, grain crops and ornamentals.

In their remarks at the ceremony, AAES Director and Auburn University College of Agriculture Dean Bill Batchelor and Alabama Cooperative Extension System Director Gary Lemme expressed gratitude to the Federation, not only for funding the new TVREC facility—“There’s no way on earth this would have happened without the support of Alfa,” Batchelor said—but also for its strong support of research and Extension at Auburn through the decades.

“This is really a reflection of the relationship that exists here in the Tennessee Valley between the Experiment Station, Extension System, our producers and industry and the Alabama Farmers Federation, which represents that industry and those farmers,” Lemme said.

College of Human Sciences
Hunger Conference Held in Honduras

A delegation of Auburn University students and administrators involved in the campus-wide War on Hunger campaign traveled to the seventh Universities Fighting World Hunger Summit in Honduras in March to join representatives from more than 200 other colleges and universities worldwide in learning about real-world solutions to fighting hunger and malnutrition around the globe.

Auburn and the College of Human Sciences took the lead in academic institutions' focus on hunger in 2004 when human sciences partnered with the U.N. World Food Programme to establish the War on Hunger initiative on campus. From that effort, Auburn and the WFP developed Universities Fighting World Hunger, which aims to make fighting hunger a core value of higher-education institutions in the U.S. and internationally.

The summit in Honduras, the first such event to be held outside North America, was opened by Honduran President Porfirio Lobo Sosa, the only host country president thus far to attend the summit. Also in attendance were Sosa's cabinet members, university presidents and top-level administrators from several Latin American countries.

Auburn was represented by 16 undergraduate and graduate students and officials from the offices of Student Affairs and International Education and the colleges of Agriculture and Human Sciences. For some of the students, the summit was a chance to continue collaborations that were started when Honduran students visited Auburn in October. For Auburn faculty, it was a chance to build relationships with Honduran professors and lay the groundwork for future research collaborations.

Research efforts pertaining to hunger are also being promoted through the Auburn University International Hunger Institute, established in February to enhance existing partnerships among various colleges at Auburn and across the region, nation and world to fight domestic and global hunger.

College of Sciences and Mathematics

Arboretum Earns National Recognition for Oak Collection

Auburn University's Donald E. Davis Arboretum has won national recognition for its extensive and valuable collection of oaks.

Home to 38 species of oaks native to Alabama and the Southeast, including rare and threatened species, the arboretum has been honored by the North American Plant Collections Consortium as a member of its Multi-Site Quercus, or oak, Collection, a distinction given to select botanical gardens and arboreta. Auburn's arboretum, in the College of Sciences and Mathematics, is one of only 20 from across the country to be accepted into the Quercus Collection.

"This recognition of the arboretum's oak collection is really exciting for the university," says Dee Smith, curator of the arboretum. "It integrates Auburn University into a national organization of collections and increases the visibility of our research and conservation efforts."

Arboretum staff began pursuing membership in the Quercus Collection two years ago. Discovering it had to fill in some missing credentials, staff began working not only to create the missing documents but also to increase and vary the number of oak species in its collection through acquisition of new oaks and acorns.

"For us to be considered for the collection, we had to demonstrate why and how we'd be valuable to the consortium's existing collection," Smith says. "They didn't have Southern Oaks, so by having this great Southern collection, we really set ourselves apart from the group as a desirable addition. It was our complete collection of oaks that enticed the consortium to include the arboretum in the Quercus Collection."

Though recognized for its oaks, the arboretum also includes other holdings from azaleas to other species native to the Southeast. To see the oak collection or the arboretum's other plants, the public is invited to visit the arboretum, located on the corner of South College Street and Garden Drive, seven days a week. Admission is free. For more information, go to www.auburn.edu/cosam/arboretum/.



CRUSHING CANCER Bruce Smith, director of the Auburn University Research Initiative in Cancer, believes that research tools available at Auburn University make AURIC unique. Only four other universities in the U.S. have the combination of engineering and veterinary medicine colleges as well as an MRI facility.

College of Veterinary Medicine
Auburn Launches "One Medicine" Cancer Initiative

The Auburn University College of Veterinary Medicine has launched an initiative aimed at accelerating cancer innovation from the laboratory to the clinic. The Auburn University Research Initiative in Cancer, or AURIC, embodies "One Medicine"—the concept that sees human and animal health as a single field where discoveries in one species advance health in both species.

"In 2010, more than 23,000 new cases of cancer were diagnosed and more than 10,000 people died of cancer in Alabama," says Bruce Smith, AURIC director and professor in the College of Veterinary Medicine's Department of Pathobiology and scientist in the Scott-Richey Research Center.

"In addition to being ill with cancer or seeing relatives endure pain, many Alabamians have also watched a beloved pet suffer from this disease," Smith says. "Animals and humans share many of the same cancers, and what we learn in treating a tumor in a dog can teach us more about treating the same tumor in a person."

AURIC received a \$1 million appropriation from the State of Alabama to support cancer research by Auburn University faculty in a wide range of cancer-related areas. Members of AURIC's board include scientists and oncologists with the College of Veterinary Medicine as well as representatives with Auburn's Harrison School of Pharmacy and Samuel Ginn College of Engineering.

"The goal is to leverage this initial funding into increased federal and private support," Smith says.

Alabama House Speaker Mike Hubbard of Auburn was instrumental in establishing AURIC, and a fellowship in cancer research at Auburn has been established in Hubbard's name to fund an outstanding student pursuing a Ph.D. in cancer research.

For more information on the AURIC, visit www.AURIConline.org.

School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences



Nursery Cooperative Celebrates 40 Years as Industry Resource

The Southern Forest Nursery Management Cooperative is celebrating 40 years of service to forest-tree nurseries across the southern United States.

"The goal of the cooperative is to conduct research, solve seedling production issues and then provide information to forest-tree nurseries so they can increase their productivity," says Scott Enebak, cooperative director and professor in Auburn's School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences

The cooperative began in 1972 under the direction of Auburn forestry professor Dean Gjerstad and Department of Forestry colleagues, with a plan to help Southeastern forest-tree growers create ideal growing conditions, improve the health and quality of seedlings, expand the forest-tree industry and increase the productivity and income of nursery owners.

Forty years later, cooperative members grow 80 to 85 percent of the forest-tree seedlings planted in the United States in state, industrial and private nurseries ranging from Virginia to Oklahoma.

In addition to conducting research, scientists with the cooperative travel to nurseries to investigate seedling problems and provide advice. This outreach to its membership has been cited by several nursery owners as one of the main reasons they support the nursery cooperative.

The cooperative also works with government agencies, such as USDA and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, as a liaison with the forest-tree industry, answering questions pertaining to pesticide use and nursery culture.

More information about the Southern Forest Nursery Management Cooperative is available online at www.nurserycoop.auburn.edu/.

Reaching the World

Teaching Them To Fish
Fisheries' Veverica Devotes Career to International Aquaculture Development

by JAMIE CREAMER

Karen Veverica personifies that Chinese proverb about teaching a man to fish versus just giving him a fish. For roughly half of her 36-year career in aquaculture, the Auburn University Department of Fisheries and Allied Aquacultures employee and mother of two has lived and worked in Africa, training men and women in economically developing countries there not simply to fish but to fish farm, and thus, as the ancient adage concludes, feeding them for a lifetime.

For Veverica, who joined the fisheries department at Auburn in 1981 and in January was named interim director of Auburn's E.W. Shell Fisheries Center, aquaculture in general and international aquaculture development in particular appears to have been written in the stars. A native of the "Great Lakes State" of Michigan, Veverica says it was obvious from an early age that water was most definitely her element.

"I've always been drawn to water," she says. "One birthday, my brother gave me some diving equipment, and I would sit for hours at the bottom of the lake, fascinated." In her younger years, she dreamed of becoming a marine biologist, but then she discovered aquaculture.

"Aquaculture started getting a lot of attention in the 1970s, and I realized that here was a field that would allow me to work around water and use my knowledge to produce food and make a difference in the world, and I said, 'Oh yeah; there you go; that's what I'll do,'" Veverica says.

In 1976, fresh out of Michigan State University with a bachelor's degree in biological sciences—"MSU's fisheries degree was mostly fisheries management, and since I couldn't afford to go out of state, biological sciences made the most sense," she says—Veverica joined the Peace Corps, where a strong background in water chemistry and years of high-school and college French classes landed her the assignment she had hoped for, as a fish farming volunteer in Cameroon. With that placement, Veverica and two fellow female volunteers made Peace Corps history as the first women ever to have been placed in fish farming positions.

"For some reason, the Peace Corps had always considered fish farming a man's job," Veverica says. "They just happened to decide with us to experiment, to test us to see if women could handle the conditions and the labor involved."

"Before we had finished our two years, they had brought in another group of women."

It was in Cameroon that she became aware of Auburn University's fisheries program and, in particular, of faculty member Claude Boyd.

"My Peace Corps trainer was an Auburn fisheries grad, and he let me use his old college class notes to learn all I could about water quality for aquaculture," she says. "They were his notes from Dr. Boyd's class. So even though I've never officially taken one of Dr. Boyd's courses, a lot of what I know I learned from him."

When her overseas stint ended, Veverica returned to the States and worked with the Peace Corps for a short time as a trainer of new fish-farming volunteers, then in 1980 enrolled at Oregon State University to pursue a master's in aquaculture. She was completing that degree and working at OSU's marine science center when Auburn advertised an opening for an aquaculture technician at the fisheries research station.

"The day that announcement came out, three people put it in my mailbox, saying I fit the job description perfectly," Veverica says. "All my professors were urging me to apply, too. Auburn was 'The Place' for warm-water aquaculture, and for them, to have a student of theirs get a job at Auburn was wonderful."

At Auburn, she was responsible for helping manage the fisheries research ponds and facilities, but she had been in that role less than two years when

Auburn was awarded a five-year U.S. Agency for International Development fish culture project in Rwanda, and she was tapped to be chief of party and training specialist of that mission for two years.

Two years turned into 10, and when she returned to Auburn and her job at the research ponds in 1993, she was accompanied by Roelof Sikkens, a Netherlands native whom she had met and, in 1988, married in Rwanda, where he was working for Cornell University as a drainage systems engineer. The couple's son, Andrew, was born in '93 and, a year later, daughter Diane.

From the get-go, Sikkens handled most of the child-rearing responsibilities—"he knew how much I loved my work," Veverica says—and also took the lead in managing a commercial fishing operation in north Alabama that the couple had purchased as a side venture in 1995.

But neither motherhood nor entrepreneurship diminished Veverica's passion for sharing her knowledge of sustainable fish culture with the developing world. In 1997, when the fisheries department offered Veverica a role in a collaborative international sustainable aquaculture project administered



THE SCIENCE OF AQUACULTURE Among the many roles that Karen Veverica, a research associate in the Department of Fisheries and Allied Aquacultures and now interim director of the E.W. Shell Fisheries Center in Auburn, played in international aquaculture development was to help fish farmers in Uganda learn the science of growing fish.



PEOPLE PERSON During her time in Africa, Veverica not only helped develop aquaculture, but also developed relationships with families in the communities she served.

by Oregon State in Kenya, she and Sikkens packed up the little ones, ages 3 and 2, and went. In addition to conducting fish farming research and training, Veverica supervised construction of more than 70 ponds, water-quality labs and hatchery facilities. Andrew and Diane, meanwhile, started preschool and then school in Kenyan classrooms.

"We didn't shelter them; we totally immersed them in the culture there," Veverica says. "They didn't know you get gifts at Christmas till we came back to Auburn" in 2000.

Five years later, another out-of-country opportunity came her—and her family's—way, this time to serve as chief of party for a three-and-a-half-year,

Auburn-led, private-sector-driven initiative to jump-start commercial aquaculture in Uganda through the development of model fish farms.

"The kids were in fifth and sixth grade, and my husband was working in the agronomy department's cotton breeding program, so there was a lot more to consider this time, but they were all OK with the idea of going," Veverica says, noting that Sikkens did travel back and forth to Auburn during that time to maintain his job with agronomy. And the children attended an international school instead of one in the Ugandan system.

Since completing the Uganda venture and returning to the Department of Fisheries and Allied Aquaculture, Veverica has traveled to several African nations for short-term projects and consulting work, but the family as a whole has stayed put. Andrew's now a sophomore aerospace engineering major at Auburn; Diane just graduated from Auburn High School and will enroll in Vermont's Bennington College this fall to study psychology and, interestingly, international development.

Veverica admits that balancing motherhood with an intense professional commitment brought its share of guilt trips through the years, but she says the international experiences have been a "huge advantage" to the family.

"My husband's from the Netherlands, and we've all lived in Africa and traveled in Africa, Europe and Asia," she says. "We both agreed our children should feel as if they are citizens of the world." ☞



ACADEMY OF FELLOWS ESTABLISHED A new Auburn University College of Agriculture Academy of Fellows has been established to honor those faculty who have achieved the highest honor in their fields, that of being chosen as fellows in their respective societies. The new academy, created by College of Agriculture Dean Bill Batchelor, will induct new members as future faculty and staff become fellows in their societies. Those honored at the inaugural dinner and ceremony in April were, front row, from left, S.F. "Sarge" Bilgili, professor and Extension specialist of poultry science; John Liu, associate dean for research, assistant director of the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station and professor of fisheries and allied aquacultures; Lane Sauser, chief financial officer for the College of Agriculture and Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station; Rodrigo Rodriguez-Kabana, Distinguished University Professor of entomology and plant pathology; Henry Fadamiro, Alumni Professor of entomology and plant pathology. Back row, from left, were Batchelor; David Bransby, professor of agronomy and soils; Claude Boyd, professor and Butler-Cunningham Eminent Scholar in fisheries and allied aquacultures; David Weaver, professor of agronomy and soils; Wes Wood, professor of agronomy and soils; Joe Touchton, head and professor of agronomy and soils; Charles Gilliam, professor of horticulture; and Joe Molnar, professor of agricultural economics and rural sociology and coordinator of the Office of International Agriculture. Also inducted but not present at the ceremony were Beth Guertal, professor of agronomy and soils, and Werner Bergen, professor of animal sciences. Visit www.ag.auburn.edu/dean/awards/fellows.php to learn more about each inductee.

Student Accomplishments

Department of Animal Sciences undergraduate students who participated in the Southern Section American Society of Animal Science gave outstanding performances. **Brandon Smith** placed first and **Cassandra Key** placed third in the Undergraduate Student Competition. Auburn's academic quadrathlon team placed second out of eight teams in the southeastern region. The team is composed of Smith, **Reba Hicks**, **Casey Randle** and **Courteney McNamee**. The team placed first in the practicum and oral presentation, and third in the written exam.

Haitham Mohammed and **Andrea Larsen**, two doctoral students in the Department of Fisheries and Allied Aquacultures, earned top honors for their research presentations in recent competitions. Mohammed won the best student presentation award at the 28th annual meeting of the Alabama Fisheries Association in Columbiana. Larsen's paper was named the most outstanding in the student-paper competition at the 89th annual meeting of the Alabama Academy of Sciences in Tuskegee.

Ting Li, an Auburn entomology Ph.D. student won first-place honors in the oral-presentation competition for research held recently during the 2012 joint annual meeting of the Southeastern and Southwestern branches of the Entomological Society of America in Little Rock.

Ethan Lake, a senior in ag education from Vinemont, placed fourth in the Brahman division, third in the Market Animal division, fourth in oral reasons and third in the total contest at the 25th annual Intercollegiate Beef Cattle Judging Contest held during the Dixie National Livestock Expo in February. In addition, Lake was high individual in market animal oral reasons.

Sarah Stephenson and **Benjamin Forest Aldridge** recently took home honors at the inaugural Poultry Science Club Awards. Stephenson, a freshman in poultry production from Danville, received the "Spring Chicken" award for students in their first through fourth semester at Auburn. Aldridge, a senior in poultry production from Moulton, received the "Poultry in Motion" award for students who have been at Auburn for more than four semesters. The award recipients received \$500 each.

The College of Agriculture recently selected **April Maxwell**, a junior in agronomy and soils, and **Sarah Richard**, a junior in biosystems engineering, to participate in the College of Agriculture Undergraduate Research Fellowship during its first year.

Andrej Svyantek, a junior in agronomy and soils, and **Enrique Doster**, a sophomore in animal sciences, were selected for the Auburn University Undergraduate Research Fellowship.

Staci DeGeer, a Ph.D. student in meat science and food safety, was presented with an AU Animal Science Graduate Student Scholarship at the 69th annual Alabama Cartlemen's Association Convention and Trade Show in Huntsville.

William (Will) Budnick of New Haven, Conn., a senior in fisheries and allied aquacultures, was named the Student Government Association's 2012 Outstanding Undergraduate in the College of Agriculture. **Stephen Christopher Marble** of Rainbow City, a Ph.D. student in horticulture, won the 2012 university-wide Outstanding Graduate Student Award.

Josiah Greene, a senior majoring in agricultural communications, was a member of a student team that won a Student Medallion Award for Special or One-time Public Relations Programs from the Public Relations Council of Alabama for a marketing project named "Songs for Soldiers."

The 2012 recipient of the Claude Hardee Memorial Award in Agriculture was **Mary Catherine Cochrane**, who graduated in May with a bachelor's degree in horticulture.

Emily Brennan, who graduated in May with a degree in animal sciences, received the President's Award for the College of Agriculture and served as graduation marshal for the college at the spring commencement ceremony.

The Comer Medal for Excellence in Agricultural Science was awarded to **E'lyssa Claire Ritchey**, who graduated in May with a degree in horticulture.

Ethan Parker, who graduated this spring summa cum laude with a bachelor's degree in agronomy and soils, received the 2012 Dean's Award.

Numerous departments nominated students for Auburn University Outstanding International Graduate Student awards. Nominees were **Lina Cui**, agricultural economics and rural sociology; **Jatinder Singh Aulakh**, agronomy and soils; **Suresh Sharma**, biosystems engineering; **Ting Yang**, entomology and plant pathology; **Erin Cash**, fisheries and allied aquacultures; and **Yilanna Hu**, horticulture.

Faculty and Staff Accomplishments

Henry Kinnucan, professor of agricultural economics, is the 2012 recipient of the Southern Agricultural Economics Association's prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award. Kinnucan was also named an Auburn University Alumni Professor beginning in the upcoming 2012-13 academic year.

Donald Allen Davis, professor of fisheries and allied aquacultures, was also awarded an Auburn University Alumni Professorship for 2012-2013.

Jeremy Davis, agricultural technician in fisheries and allied aquacultures, won an Auburn University Spirit of Excellence Award in the service and maintenance category.

Ayanava Majumdar, state coordinator of the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program at Auburn, is the recipient of the 2012 Friends of Southern IPM Future Leader Award.

W.B. "Dub" Webster, former director of the Tennessee Valley Research and Extension Center, was honored recently for his many years of service and leadership at the TVREC in Belle Mina with a special plaque that will be displayed in the new Alabama Farmers Federation Administrative Building at the center.

Jorge Mosjidis, professor of agronomy and soils, was named the Southern Region nominee for the National Excellence in Multistate Research Award for his contributions in a project designed to examine the introduction, multiplication and evaluation of new plants for agricultural and industrial uses and the preservation of valuable germplasm. Mosjidis also retired on April 30.

Werner Bergen, professor of animal sciences, was named a fellow of the American Society for Nutrition, the preeminent worldwide scientific organization for nutritional sciences.

On a recent trip to India, a College of Agriculture delegation signed four exchange agreements that

will benefit the college and AAES. Among the College of Agriculture faculty and staff who went on the trip were College of Ag Dean **William Batchelor**; Office of International Agriculture coordinator **Joe Molnar**; **Michael Williams** and **M.S. Reddy**, both in entomology and pathology; **Manpreet Singh** and **Ken Macklin**, both in poultry science; and **Nada K. Nadarajah** in animal sciences.

David Bransby, professor of agronomy and soils, was appointed by U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and Secretary of Energy Steven Chu to a second three-year term on the Technical Advisory Committee for the Biomass Research and Development Initiative.

Karen L. Veverica, interim director of the E.W. Shell Fisheries Center, received the Staff Award at the annual Women's Leadership Conference.

Katie Jackson, chief editor for the college and AAES and adviser and instructor for students majoring in agricultural communications, was named the 2012 Outstanding Faculty Member for the College of Agriculture by the Auburn University Student Government Association.

In Memoriam

Robert L. "Bob" McGuire, 80, former head of Extension Animal Science and professor emeritus of animal sciences who retired 1994 after 19 years of service to Auburn University and Alabama's cattle industry, passed away Feb. 27. Memorials in his honor may be made to the Alabama Cartlemen's Foundation in support of youth activities, P.O. Box 2499, Montgomery, Ala. 36102, or Auburn First Baptist Church, 128 E. Glenn Ave., Auburn, Ala. 36830.

Peggy Sue King, 77, retired senior research technician in the Department of Entomology and Plant Pathology, passed away March 9. King worked for Auburn more than 45 years and was involved in research, teaching and dissemination of knowledge, much of which focused on nematodes. Memorials may be made in her honor to Hospice Advantage / East Alabama Medical Center at 665 Opelika Road, Auburn, Ala. 36830.

William S. "Bill" Gazaway, 72, former Alabama Cooperative Extension System plant pathologist, passed away March 20. Gazaway retired in 1999 after 25 years of service to the university, then continued working as a consultant until his death. Memorials in his honor may be made to the United Methodist Children's Home, 3140 Zelda Court, Montgomery, Ala. 36106-2607, or to a charity of your choice.

Upcoming Event

The 11th annual Farm, Home and Wildlife Expo will be held Aug. 4, noon to 5 p.m., at the Chilton Research and Extension Center in Clanton. Participants can learn about a wide variety of subjects ranging from farm pond management to home gardening to commercial fruit and vegetable production. For more information contact Jim Pitts, CREC director, at 205-646-3610 or pittsja@auburn.edu.

Extension Works to Build Urban Farming Sector

Ayanava Majumdar is convinced that urban farming has the potential to dramatically improve the lives of tens of thousands of Alabamians, and as head of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System's Commercial Horticulture group and state coordinator for the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program, he is on a mission to spread enthusiasm for the concept.

"We're talking about a community movement of self-sustenance," Majumdar says. "We're trying to get back to the village concept, where people know each other and trade with each other and where these reciprocal relationships are self-sustaining."

He's the first to admit he's got his work cut out for him. "This is not going to happen until the food is of high quality, readily accessible to consumers and affordable," he says.

Working with members of his team and partnering with other public and private entities, including the Alabama Sustainable Agriculture Network, Majumdar will be providing training in urban agricultural practices around the state. His ultimate goal is to help build a thriving urban farming sector in Alabama that not only works seamlessly but that also provides people in every urban locality in the state with access to fresh, locally grown produce at affordable prices.

For more information, contact Majumdar at azm0024@auburn.edu.

New Guide Promotes Coosa County Creeks

"Floating down a quiet creek with only the sound of rippling waters and birds singing makes for a great day. Coosa County is blessed with two creeks that host some of the most scenic floats in Alabama."

So begins a colorful new field guide, complete with maps, that is designed to introduce folks across the state and beyond to the beauty of Coosa County—specifically, its Hatchet and Weogufka creeks.

he believed, would encourage folks from around Alabama and beyond to share in the natural beauty and rich histories of the county's streams, and that, in turn, could benefit the county in several ways, including increasing tourism.

With that in mind, Vines applied for a grant from the Coosa Valley Resource Conservation and Development Council to develop and print maps of the Hatchet and the Weogufka. The group awarded the grant, and at that point, Vines began enlisting partners, including fellow county Extension agents, Extension's communications and marketing department, the Alabama Scenic River Trail and interested county residents.

David Kelley, a Coosa County native who now has retired there, was among those interested residents. As a veteran canoeist on the creeks and one who had owned creek-side property, he joined the project's data-gathering crew, which timed floats between creek sections, identified and named landmarks, established GPS coordinates for the landmarks and worked with landowners to establish several primitive camp sites along the creeks where paddlers could safely and legally camp overnight.

That wealth of information is included in "Coosa County Creeks Trail Guide/Maps," a publication that features a cover shot of a cluster of rare Cahaba lilies in full bloom mid-stream.

"We hope that the maps will give people a better perspective on how beautiful Coosa County is," Kelley says. "We believe this kind of ecotourism will bring in much needed revenue but leave a light footprint."

The navigator's guide is nothing if not thorough. In addition to the precise creek maps marked with put-in, take-out and camping sites, it tells the histories of the two streams and guides paddlers to several historic spots, such as the remains of two early hydroelectric dams and the Weogufka's Shoemaker's Cave, where legend says a shoemaker concealed himself as he made shoes and boots for Confederate soldiers.

The publication also highlights wildlife, aquatic life and vegetation along the creeks and provides a range of helpful information, from the best times of year to float the creeks to campsite etiquette.

To download a copy of "Coosa County Creeks Trail Guide/Maps," ANR-1400, go to <https://store.aces.edu> and search for "Coosa County creeks."

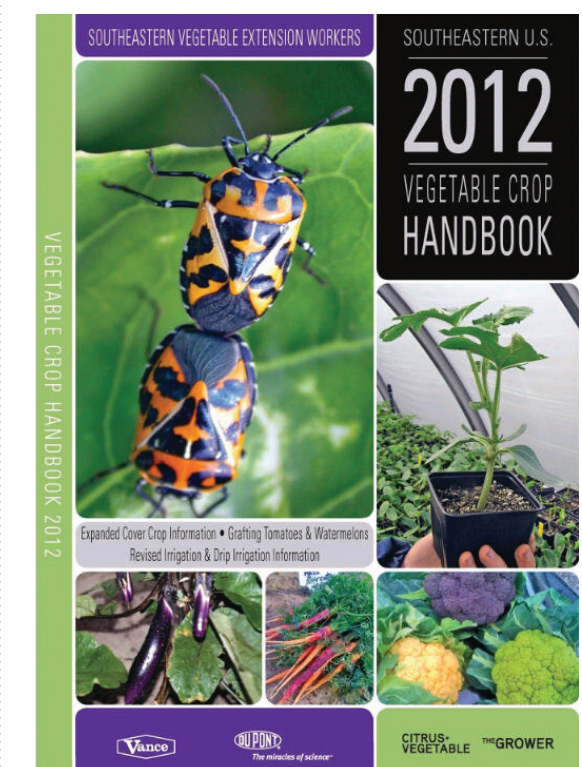


CONSIDER THE LILIES Arrays of endangered Cahaba lilies are among the breathtaking sights that await canoeists on Coosa County's Hatchet Creek. A new guide to the county's Hatchet and Weogufka creeks advises that the lilies typically are in full bloom around Memorial Day.

2011 Vegetable Crop Handbook Wins Blue Ribbon

The Southern Region of the American Society for Horticultural Science has presented its Extension Blue Ribbon Communication Award to the "2011 Southeastern U.S. Vegetable Crop Handbook." Joe Kemble, a horticulture specialist with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System and senior editor of the handbook, accepted the award during the society's recent conference in Birmingham.

Kemble, who also served as senior editor of the 2012 edition that is available online for free, says the annual handbook is a joint effort



2012 EDITION The "2012 Southeastern U.S. Vegetable Crop Handbook," produced by the Southeastern Vegetable Extension Workers Group under the senior editorship of Alabama Extension horticulture specialist Joe Kemble at Auburn, updates research and production information that was included in the award-winning 2011 edition. Kemble was senior editor of that publication as well.

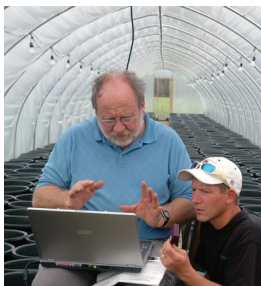
involving Extension specialists and researchers from land-grant universities across the Southeast who work in the area of vegetable production.

"This handbook has been the go-to reference for vegetable producers in the Southeast for more than 10 years," says Kemble, horticulture professor in Auburn University's Department of Horticulture. "It is a practical guide for producers that covers everything from variety selection and fertilizer recommendations to post-harvest handling and pest management tools."

"It is an honor for the 2011 edition to win the Blue Ribbon Communication Award," he says.

More than 50 scientists from 10 southeastern land-grant universities contributed to the 2011 handbook. Alabama Extension specialists Ayanava Majumdar, entomologist, and Ed Sikora, plant pathologist, were among those contributors, as was Edgar Vinson, a research associate in Auburn's horticulture department.

To download the 2012 Southeastern U.S. Vegetable Crop Handbook, go to <https://store.aces.edu> and search for ANR-1344.



Make Plans for Ag Discovery Day

Alabamians will have the opportunity to see modern agriculture in action on Sept. 29 when the first-ever Ag Discovery Adventure: A Window to the Future day is held at E.V. Smith Research Center in Shorter.



The full lineup for Ag Discovery Adventure is still a work in progress, but already on tap are hay rides, high-tech treasure hunts, a corn maze, modern technology to enhance agriculture production, worm beds and a milking demonstration, all designed to introduce folks of all ages and walks of life to the wide world of agriculture, from crop and animal production and bioenergy to home gardening and sustainability.

To learn more visit www.AgDiscoveryAdventure.com or contact 334-844-5887 or agcomm@auburn.edu.

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Recipe File

Fruits of the Season

Blackberries, Peaches Star in This Mouthwatering Dessert

Plump, juicy blackberries and sweet, succulent peaches team up in this winner of a farm-to-table recipe from Auburn University horticulture alumnus James T. Farmer III. You can find it and other time-tested family recipes, including one for the perfect sweet tea, in Farmer's book, "A Time To Plant: Southern-Style Garden Living" as well as on his blog at www.allthingsfarmer.com. For more about Farmer, see the story, P. 1.

Blackberry and Peach Crisp

- 8 tablespoons salted butter, room temperature, divided
- 6 fresh peaches*
- 2 cups fresh blackberries
- ½ cup sugar, or more to taste
- 2 cups old-fashioned oats
- ¾ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- 1 ½ cups chopped pecans, optional

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Melt 4 tablespoons butter in a 9-by-13-inch dish in the oven until bubbly. Meanwhile, peel and pit the peaches and slice into wedges. Wash blackberries and pat dry.

Remove dish from oven and mix the two fruits together in the bubbling butter. This browns and "fries" the fruit before baking. Use the 1/2 cup sugar if your fruits are not sweet enough for your taste.

For the topping, mix the oats, flour, brown sugar (and white sugar, if not already used) and remaining 4 tablespoons butter until the mixture resembles a coarse meal. Add a bit more butter if needed for desired consistency. Mix in pecans for additional crunch, if desired. Spread the topping mixture across the fruit and bake for about 45 minutes, until golden and bubbly. Serve with ice cream.

*Farmer's tip: Place peaches in boiling water for about 20 seconds, then transfer to an ice bath. This stops the cooking, and the skin will peel right off.

