

GREETINGS FROM THE CHAIR

June 2002 – Volume 2, Number 1

GREETINGS TO OUR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS. We were able to visit with some of you in January at the first alumni reception at the Gulf States Horticultural Expo. Dr. Ponder did an outstanding job of introducing everyone. Alumni and friend events are planned for the Southern Nursery Association Trade Show and Gulf States Expo. Please join us at these informal get-togethers.

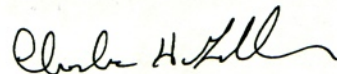
ALFA has been helping to bring federal support to our horticulture research programs. Brian Hardin, one of our graduates, is the horticulture commodity director for Nursery, Greenhouse, and Sod. Brian has worked closely with our faculty and last year we secured \$750,000 in federal money to support departmental programs. Congress members critical in this process were Senators Shelby and Sessions, representatives Aderholt, Everett, and Callahan. If you are in their district, please contact them and express your appreciation for their support. We have three funding requests currently pending and your voice will help our cause greatly.

The Henry P. Orr Fund for Horticultural Excellence continues to grow. We now have approximately \$100,000 pledged with \$75,000 received. These endowments will have long-term benefits to the faculty and students in the department. In addition, the Hoyt Adair Endowment in the fruit and vegetable area continues to grow. I encourage you to consider making a contribution.

All of us continue to be very excited about the renovation of the Paterson greenhouse complex. We plan to have two consecutive one-day nursery/landscape and greenhouse educational events on September 4 and 5 with a dinner at the AU Conference Center. Dates are tentative, please check with us later for confirmation. You will have an opportunity to see our tremendous progress with the greenhouse facility.

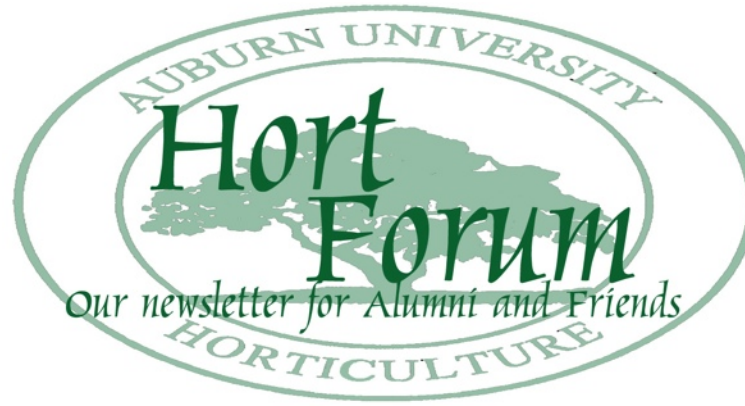
The faculty just completed a 2 day retreat at Pursell Technologies. Mr. Pursell and his folks were wonderful hosts and provided an environment for relaxed discussions concerning the future of our department. Major decisions made included: making interior plants and flower arranging course a priority for Horticulture students; hiring a graduate to help with registration, Camp War Eagle, SOS transfer student days, coordinating on-campus interview schedules, setting up alumni and friends events, and developing promotional materials for the department (student advising beyond registration will be done by faculty most heavily involved in the instruction program); increasing our graduate stipend to make us competitive; making the greenhouse facility a living classroom by closer coordination of class activities on the facility; making instruction the number one priority for use of the new greenhouses; and working to keep enrollment in labs at a manageable level to ensure the delivery of a high quality instructional program.

These are exciting times for the Horticulture Department from increased federal funding for research, endowments to support extending classroom activities, a new faculty member, Dr. Amy Wright, newly renovated greenhouse facilities, Dr. Jeff Sibley's Alumni Professorship Award and a faculty with a vision and commitment to become the best Horticulture program in the nation. We could never have attained these levels of excellence without the support of our alumni and friends. We appreciate all of your support and look forward to continuous improvement of our programs with your help. Thanks again for all you do to support our program.



Charles Gilliam
Professor

Chair, Horticulture Department



PATERSON GREENHOUSE FACILITY RENOVATION

Last year it was determined that several greenhouses at the Paterson Greenhouse facility were unsafe. This determination set in motion efforts to renovate or replace a number of structures. Many individuals, both inside and outside of Auburn, were instrumental in the process that led to the \$1.2 million renovation for the much needed changes. An architect was hired and during this planning process it was discovered that many basic services were inadequate and that the needs of the Department had changed over the years. Most of the planning involved the architect, faculty members, members of Auburn's Facilities Division, and input from several Alabama greenhouse growers.

Three glass-on-wood greenhouses connected to the head house have been demolished and have been replaced by a 4,600 square foot, gutter-connected greenhouse. The house is glazed with twin-wall polycarbonate and has modern environmental control systems. An old fiberglass-on-wood greenhouse was also demolished and replaced by a 2,300 square foot, polyethylene-covered Quonset greenhouse.

The head house is in the process of being gutted and renovated, creating new offices, bathrooms, and safety equipment. The current classroom will be expanded and renovated to accommodate a maximum of 40 students. The portion of the building east of the classroom has been demolished and will be replaced by a new walk-in cooler, lab space and potting area for class laboratories. Both buildings will receive "face lifts" and new cooling/heating systems.

To separate instruction and research activities, a new potting and work area has been constructed primarily for research activities. A new pesticide storage unit, combined with a mixing/rinsing station, has been built. Other amenities will include paving the main drive, creating better parking, new entry gates, re-working of the sewer system, and the addition of a new teaching garden.

These changes are exciting and long overdue. They will allow the department to better educate its students so they can better serve the horticulture industry. Hopefully, all will be complete by fall semester.

IT IS OUR PLEASURE TO INTRODUCE OUR NEW FACULTY MEMBER: AMY WRIGHT

Amy Noelle Wright is originally from Blacksburg, Virginia. She attended Virginia Tech where she received a B.S. in Chemistry with a minor in Biochemistry in 1996 as well as an M.S. in Horticulture in 1998. Her work in Horticulture at Virginia Tech was in the area of nursery production and plant nutrition. Amy also attended North Carolina State University where she received a Ph.D. in Horticultural Science in 2002. Her Ph.D. research focused

on landscape establishment of woody ornamentals. Amy has enjoyed teaching throughout all of her graduate programs and looks forward to teaching and conducting research here at Auburn. She is scheduled to teach Plant Propagation, Plant Growth and Development, and Landscape Gardening. Her research will continue to focus on landscape horticulture. Amy has family in Virginia, Georgia, and Tennessee, and is anxious to see how hot it can really get in Auburn in the summer.

DANE AND SIBLEY RECEIVE COMPETITIVE GRANT

Doctors Dane and Sibley received a competitive General Fee Equipment award of \$23,833 from Auburn University toward the purchase of three laminar flow hoods to aid students with plant tissue culture and plant genetic engineering technologies. Undergraduate students in several horticulture courses can now get better exposed to different tissue culture techniques and graduate students in the plant biotechnology course can gain in-depth experience with recombinant DNA technology and plant transformation techniques.

LANDSCAPE DESIGN COMPETITION

This spring the Interim Dean of Agriculture, John Jensen, sponsored a design competition for students in the Intermediate Landscape Design Class. Dr. Jensen is interested in Ag Hill becoming both a living classroom and a showpiece of agriculture for all to enjoy. To promote this idea Dr. Jensen offered a \$250 prize to the best student design for Comer and Funchess Hall. After many discussions and much debate the design selection committee was able to narrow the designs down to one winner for each site. The winning design for Comer Hall was developed by Ben Richardson while Shelley Page developed the winning design for Funchess Hall. The next step in the process will be working with facilities to get these projects installed over the next few months for all to enjoy.

FACULTY HONORS

While the best way to see the worth of our faculty is through the success of our graduates, we are also excited when direct recognition comes from the University Administration. This spring, two Horticulture Department faculty members were selected for special commendations. Alumni Professorships are highly competitive campus-wide awards recognizing the contributions in research and instruction of 5 professors each year. Associate Professor Jeff Sibley is the first member of the Horticulture Department ever selected for this award. Associate Professor Dave Williams was one of five professors campus-wide presented with an Outstanding Undergraduate Teaching Excellence Award. Dr. Williams' Award and Dr. Sibley's Professorship are sponsored by the Auburn Alumni Association in recognition of the outstanding contributions made to students, the department, College of Agriculture, and the University.

Another faculty member, Dr. Bob Ebel, has been granted tenure with promotion to Associate Professor. Dr. Joe Eakes and Suzanne Knight, a senior in the department, were selected in a campus-wide process for a special Undergraduate Research Fellowship.

ANNUAL ALCA COMPETITION

Thirty-five Auburn University Horticulture students attended the 26th Associated Landscape Contractors of America Student Career Days event at Illinois Central College in Peoria, IL, March 21-24. Auburn University placed 23rd out of 48 schools competing in 21 events. Among the Southeastern Conference schools that participated, Auburn placed 3rd behind Mississippi State & the University of Kentucky. Top finishers this year were Colorado State, Cal Poly Pomona and BYU.

Individual event winners were Daniel Carter and Will McInnes-3rd place in Arboriculture Techniques; Adam Lucia and Andrew McCurry-4th place in Patio Paver Installation; and Alex Klinker and Jeff Creecy-6th place in Personnel

Management. Six other students finished among the top 20 in their events. In addition to the competition Adam Lucia received a \$500 ALCA scholarship.

Faculty advisers, David Williams and Joe Eakes, received many compliments about Auburn graduates from Industry representatives. Many of the competing Auburn students were offered internship and career opportunities at the meeting in a variety of fields: design and build, landscape maintenance, nurseries, equipment manufacturers, chemical companies and retail sales operations.

Many thanks are extended to the companies who provided financial support for this trip. Your strong commitment as well as that of our students, faculty, and administration reflect very positively on Auburn University and the state of Alabama.

NOTES FROM PONDER'S DESK

During the semester break in March I had the opportunity to visit Busch Gardens in Tampa, FL. I had been looking forward to this trip for some time and one of the reasons is that CHERYL LYNN BASWELL (spring '01) is a supervisor in the gardens. She is employed by OneSource, which is one of the largest landscape companies in the United States and has taken care of Busch Gardens for over 20 years. As I wandered through Busch looking for Cheryl I spotted one of the gardeners pruning in a bed of schefflera. I inquired to see if she knew Cheryl and if she did where I might find her. When I mentioned Cheryl's name her face lit up and she said "Oh yes" and then proceeded to tell me that Cheryl was her supervisor and the best supervisor that she had ever worked for and how Cheryl had inspired and motivated her. In fact, she stood there and bragged on Cheryl for several minutes. She did all this without having the slightest idea of who I was or what I wanted with Cheryl. What a commendation of Cheryl's performance and impact on those who work under her.

Well, I met with Cheryl a few minutes later and found out that she is now over half of Busch Gardens. All of the spectacular areas that I had just walked through were her responsibility. As we talked Cheryl introduced me to an eager young lady standing beside her. She turned out to be an intern from the University of Nebraska working under Cheryl. She too was gushing in her praise for Cheryl's knowledge, leadership, and work ethic. She concluded that this had to be the best internship in the country. This got me thinking that it had been awhile since we had an intern at Busch and so when I got back to Auburn the very next week we lined up one of our students to do an internship at Busch this summer. I can't tell you how proud the department is of Cheryl and her accomplishments and what she represents.

While in Tampa I was privileged to have an extended visit with Ron Schmoyer, an old friend of mine and the Horticulture Department, who is head man at OneSource and one of the sharpest people in our industry. Ron and I spent a day talking, riding, and visiting. We visited one of their fabulous projects called The Villages. While Ron and I were riding around I got a call from JAMIE BOYNTON (summer '87) Vice-President of OneSource who was calling from Puerto Rico where he was helping their new branch get going. I had to kid him about the tough life he was leading. Jamie always seems to get the plush assignments but I guess that is just a privilege of rank. I want to thank Ron and OneSource for the great visit.

My visit with Cheryl got me to thinking about the spring '01 class and so I pulled my list of graduates and realized that I had talked and visited with several members of the spring '01 class in the last semester. Here is what I heard from those I have talked to recently. Remember, this is only those that I have talked with within the last semester:

-TERRY POWELL, who has been working for ECI in Atlanta, called to tell me that he had received a promotion to account manager and would be moving to Naples, FL. It looks like fun in the sun for Terry and he is moving up rapidly.

-GRIEG WALKER came by to visit one day and reported that his new garden center in Pell City, AL, is progressing nicely. I knew about the garden center but his impending marriage caught me by surprise.

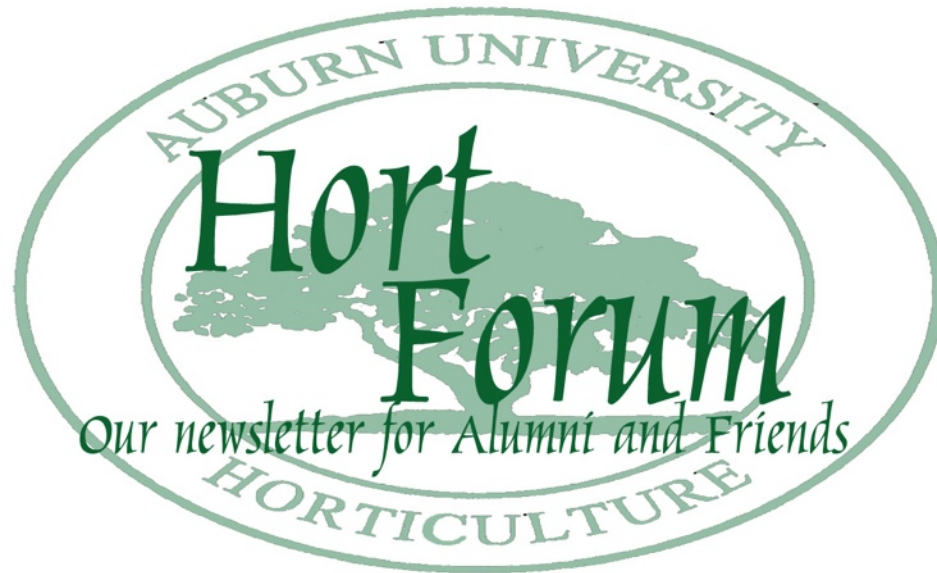
- Early one morning last semester I walked WES CLEMENT. Big Wes is with LanArc in Raleigh, NC and is doing very well. He appears to be managing a lot of their landscape installation work and has rapidly developed into the go-to-guy within the company. I

can assure everyone that OLE Wes has not changed very much and that is good. He also has marriage on his mind.

- AL JORDAN has been good to bring me samples to use in my Landscape Bidding, Installation, and Maintenance class. His tree business here in Auburn seems to be booming and he can still be found holding court in the Bar-B-Q House most very day.

- A.J. BEAVERS dropped in one day and he was accompanied by an attractive young lady who turned out to be his fiancée. A.J.'s new landscape business in Birmingham is taking off much faster than anyone expected. He is well on his way.

- 'Big Bad' JOHN RICHTER keeps me posted on happenings in the Birmingham area. John had a big hand in landscaping the new Honda plant near Lincoln, AL. He also was selected to be the person to identify all the plants at the Governor's Mansion in Montgomery which he handled expertly. He related to me that he was glad he listened



This newsletter and details (when available) about the September AU meeting will be published at the Horticulture Department Web Site: <http://www.ag.auburn.edu/dept/hf/index.htm>

If you would like to receive HORT FORUM by email instead of snail mail please send your email address to cgilliam@acesag.auburn.edu

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to all the Camellia lectures since there were many at the mansion. John works for Ross Inc. in Birmingham.

All of these people are making a name for themselves in the rough and tumble real world.

I know that I have already exceeded my space allotment and I apologize to the many, many others of you who I have heard from recently but could not include in this issue. It would take a phone book size newsletter to include everyone. I had to narrow it down to make it fit.

Just a note about the spring '02 graduating class. We had 27 graduates which comprised approximately 30% of the graduates in the College of Agriculture. Two of the largest landscape companies in the United States got three graduates each. The two companies were ECI and Brickman. The Memphis branch of ECI was able to hire 2 of those graduates thanks to the recruiting efforts of JEREMY GILLIAM (winter '99). I think Jeremy opened a lot of eyes when he succeeded in landing 2 people. The spring class was a solid group and the job market held firm with a feverish rush for graduates toward the end of the semester. So long for now.

ABUNDANT THANKS

We want to take a moment to express special appreciation to one of our Corporate Sponsors. During the greenhouse reconstruction, classes & labs had to continue, but we were without bark and soil mixing capacity for about 6 months. Chris Montgomery, one of our graduates and a Territory Sales Rep with the Buffalo Horticulture Sales Co. was able to provide all of the media we needed in several classes this spring from Fafard, Inc in Anderson, SC. Thank you, Chris, for helping us keep the ball rolling during this critical time!

YOUR CONTINUED GENEROSITY IS MUCH APPRECIATED

Your generous response to our first newsletter was very much appreciated. For those of you who are contemplating which fund to contribute to may we suggest:

The **Henry P. Orr Fund for Horticultural Excellence** was designed to enhance learning beyond the classroom and has a goal of raising \$250,000 within three years.

The **Hoyt Adair Fund** honors Hoyt Adair, a faithful supporter of Horticulture at Auburn University for many years. His family owns and operates Classical Fruits in Moulton, Alabama. The goal of this endowment is \$25,000 which will provide supplemental support for a graduate assistantship, thus enhancing the department's ability to recruit an outstanding student in the fruit/vegetable area.

Our **Horticulture Gifts account** is used for miscellaneous projects and activities in the Department. You may be contacted during the College of

Agriculture phone-a-thon. If you elect to contribute when called please be sure to designate your contribution to the Horticulture Department.

Please make your check payable to the
AUBURN UNIVERSITY HORTICULTURE DEPARTMENT
and kindly designate the fund and the amount of your contribution.
\$ _____ [Henry P. Orr Fund](#) for Horticultural Excellence

\$ _____ [Hoyt Adair Fund](#)

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Thank you so much for your generosity.

Mail this to Charles Gilliam, Professor and Chair
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