Welcome to the first edition of Plant Sentinel. I will attempt, with the help of a great staff, to provide updates in the department through this mechanism such that our faculty, students, staff, alumni and emeritus faculty might better keep up with current events around the department and the state. We hope that you like it.

It has been most definitely an active eight months. I have had the opportunity to see much of the state and meet with our faculty working across it. After reviewing our faculty, it is quite apparent that we have a great deal to be proud of. Our faculty and students have been recognized at local, state and national levels. The many kudos that our talented faculty and students have achieved in the last several months are listed in Congratulations. I have received many comments regarding positive interactions and impacts that our faculty are having across the state of Tennessee and it makes me honored to be a part of this group.

There are multiple searches going on for new faculty in residential horticulture, tobacco, cotton/small grains, landscape design as well as a business manager. Obviously, this takes a tremendous effort from the faculty and staff, particularly the search chairs. Thank you for all of your efforts, Annette Wszelaki, David Lockwood, Angela McClure, Brad Collett and Tom Mueller and your committees for your commitment to getting talented people for these important positions. We will soon be interviewing for the positions in tobacco and cotton/small grains. If you can think of talented people for any of the other key positions, please let the search chairs know.
I would like to personally thank all of you for understanding and your help during a very difficult time. In the midst of a major illness and passing of my father, finishing graduate students from my previous position, and learning how a new university system works, I have had my hands full but you have all helped me carry the substantial load. Again, thank you all for what you do for the UT Department of Plant Sciences and have a great spring.

Scott Senseman, Professor and Department Head, Plant Sciences

Congratulations!

Faculty Honored

Our department has been well recognized during the last several months. Three of our faculty were named Quest Scholars of the Week since last fall. Amy Fulcher, assistant professor, specializes in sustainable ornamental plant production and landscape management. She is the team leader of a regional group of scientists that developed a mobile phone app and associated iBook for helping commercial nursery producers with “green” disease and insect pest management. Launched in 2012, the app streamlines pest management decision-making, employee training and recordkeeping affiliated with state pesticide regulations. Recently her team's app and iBook (Select Deciduous Trees in Southeastern US Nursery Production) were awarded the Friends of IPM Bright Idea award from the Southern Integrated Pest Management Center (SIPMC). The SIPMC is dedicated to the development and adoption of Integrated Pest Management (IPM), a science-based approach to managing agricultural and horticultural pest problems in ways that generate economic, environmental and human health benefits.

Feng Chen, an associate professor in the field of plant functional genomics, is coauthor with his research associate Guanglin Li of an important paper describing the genome sequence of Amborella, published in the December 20, 2013 issue of Science. Regarded as a living fossil, Amborella is strongly supported as the most primitive flowering plant on earth. Characterizing its genome sequence is a critical step towards the understanding of the appearance of flowering plants, a phenomenon Darwin called the “abominable mystery.” In their article, Chen and Li contributed to the analysis of the terpene synthase gene family and its potential role in flowering plant evolution. This paper extends the strong publication record of the Chen lab in the field of terpene biosynthesis. In 2012, one of the Chen’s significant publications on terpene biology appeared in the journal of Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Brad Collett, assistant professor, is a scholar of landscape performance and sustainable planning and design. He recently published “Low-Impact Development: Opportunities for the PlanET Region,” which addresses the area’s water resources as economic, social and environmental assets, and details their threatened and impaired status. It proposes low-
impact development as an enhanced approach to watershed planning, community design, and site development in the five-county study area. This publication is part of his leadership and research involvement with Plan East Tennessee (PlanET), a regional partnership of communities building a shared direction for the Knoxville metropolitan area’s planning and development.

**Tom Mueller**, professor of weed science, received the Weed Science Society of America Fellow Award in February at the WSSA Annual Meeting in Vancouver, BC. The Fellow Award is the highest honor bestowed on a scientist in Weed Science and commemorates a long and productive career for those who receive it. Congratulations, Dr. Mueller.

**Max Cheng**, professor in tree physiology, has launched a new professional journal, *Horticulture Research*, in January 2014. Dr. Cheng is the founding editor-in-chief. The journal is jointly published between Nanjing Agricultural University and Nature Publishing Group, which publishes Nature, Nature Biotechnology, and other nature series of journals. The journal is an open-access, fully peer-reviewed, online journal, focusing on publishing original basic research findings in entire field of horticulture, as well as reviews and perspectives. For more details about the journal, please visit: [www.nature.com/hortres](http://www.nature.com/hortres). For submission of manuscripts, please contact Dr. Cheng at zcheng@utk.edu. Congratulations, Dr. Cheng.

**Henry Fribourg**, professor emeritus, was honored last fall at the University of Wisconsin by receiving the College of Agricultural & Life Sciences Distinguished Alumni Award for his contributions over a long and prosperous career at the University of Tennessee starting in 1956. Congratulations, Dr. Fribourg.

Congratulations to **Vince Pantalone**, professor, on getting his soybean variety ‘Ellis’ adopted as the USDA high yield check for variety trials. This is the third time that Dr. Pantalone’s plant material has been honored in this manner. The name “Ellis” has special meaning as Dr. Pantalone chose to name the variety after **Debbie and Lee Ellis** due to their long standing commitment to UT agriculture. Well done, Dr. Pantalone.
Students Honored

Mark Follis has been selected to receive the Ernest Hardison Memorial Scholarship from the Tennessee Turfgrass Association. Mark is a fifth-year senior at UT Knoxville. He has a 3.78 GPA in Plant Sciences and graduates in May 2014.

Plant Sciences student Amanda Plante has been selected for an internship with the Royal Botanic Garden, Kew, which is located in Richmond near London, England. The gardens at Kew are part of a worldwide network, and they are one of three Royal Botanic Gardens that are located in the United Kingdom. The other two in the UK are located in Belfast, Northern Ireland, and Edinburgh, Scotland. The gardens at Kew were founded in 1759. An early plant collector who contributed to these gardens was Sir Joseph Banks, a friend of King George III. Banks paid for passage several expeditions with the intent of collecting plants. One such expedition was Sir Frances Cook's legendary trip "around the world" on the Endeavor.

Five students placed in poster and oral presentations at the Southern Weed Science Society Annual Meetings in Birmingham, AL, in January. Congratulations to Eric Reasor (First Place Poster), Shane Breeden (Second Place Poster), Trevor Israel (First Place Oral Presentation), Matthew Wiggins (First Place Oral Presentation) and Javier Vargas (Second Place Oral Presentation).

Several graduate students were chosen as a 2013-14 Chancellor’s Distinguished Graduate Fellows Program Awardees. The awardees include Utsala Shrestha (Ph.D. student of Dr. David Butler), David Shell (Dr. Brandon Horvath), Jesse Benelli (Dr. Brandon Horvath) and Jonathan Willis (Dr. Neal Stewart). Congratulations to you and your mentors.

Matthew Wiggins won the paper contest and Whitney Crow won the poster contest at the Beltwide Cotton Conference in New Orleans in January. Congratulations, Matthew and Whitney.

Matt Elmore won the Graduate Student Contest at the Northeastern Weed Science Society Meeting. Congratulations, Matt.


New Additions

Francesca Sofia Butler - Daughter of Dr. David Butler

Born August 19, 2013
7 lbs. 4 oz.

Anthony James Oakes - Son of Dr. Renata Nave

Born February 24, 2014
7 lbs.
Passages

Dr. John T. Ammons, "Tom" or "Doc" to his family and friends, 68 years old of Louisville, TN passed away at home Saturday morning, February 15, 2014. He is preceded in death by his parents, Jake and Muriel (Jones) Ammons and brother, Jim Ammons of Morgantown, WV. He was educated at Morgantown High School, BSc at Arkansas State University, MSc and PhD at West Virginia University. He was a Vietnam Veteran, serving in the U.S. Air Force as a dog handler. He was professor of soil science at the University of Tennessee. He is survived by his wife, Tatiana Karpinets of Louisville, TN; her son and daughter-in-law, Bogdan and Marina Karpinec of Kursk, Russia; daughter and son-in-law, Jennifer Ammons Noble and Ryan Noble of Perth, Australia; brothers, Bob Ammons, Jack Ammons and Frank Ammons all of Morgantown, WV; sisters, Jane Nabors, Janet Nabors of Port Orchard, WA, and Sally Melatti of Lompoc, CA; grandchildren: Abigail and Elliot Ammons Noble of Perth, Australia; Lilia, Artem, Andrey and Alex Karpinec all of Kursk, Russia, and nieces and nephews. Tom loved playing music (guitar, banjo, bass and more), he led the UT Bluegrass Club, and most recently played at South Knoxville Seniors Center. Over three decades Doc also mentored many students who were like an extension of his family. Dr. Ammons was laid to rest at the Tennessee Veterans Cemetery on John Sevier Highway in Knoxville with Military Honors.

Upcoming Events

May 10 and 11 - Blooms Days, 9:00 am, UT Gardens, Knoxville, TN

June 17 - Fruits of the Backyard, 8:30 am, Middle Tennessee AgResearch and Education Center, Spring Hill, TN

June 26 - Tobacco, Beef & More, 8:00 am, Highland Rim AgResearch and Education Center, Springfield, TN

June 24 - Summer Color, 8:00 am, UT Gardens, Knoxville, TN

July 10 - Summer Celebration, 10:00 am, West Tennessee AgResearch and Education Center, Jackson, TN

July 17 - Tobacco and Forage Production, 3:00 pm, AgResearch and Education Center in Greeneville, TN

July 24 - Milan No-Till Field Day, 7:00 am, AgResearch and Education Center at Milan, TN

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