Anniversary Celebration: Last April, alumni, faculty, and staff gathered at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum to celebrate the 125th Anniversary of the Department of Horticultural Science and the 100th Anniversary of weekly department seminars.

INSIDE:

Horticulture. A culture of...

Creativity.
Alumna Esther McGinnis finds her way along a winding career path

Innovation.
Dr. Paul Boswell mentors high school students through Project SEED

Excellence.
Two new faculty members join the Department of Horticultural Science

Community.
Upcoming alumni events include the Northern Green Expo Alumni Social and the annual Kermit Olson Scholarship Lecture & Reception
Alumni Spotlight: From the Courtroom to the Field

Ten years ago, alumna Esther McGinnis never imagined she would be working in the field of horticulture. In 1996, McGinnis graduated from the U of M Law School with a Juris Doctor degree. She began working for a small St. Paul law firm following her passion in environmental law, but as casework began to dry up, she turned to work in real estate, marital dissolution, and appellate law. McGinnis became disillusioned with life in the courtroom. At the same time, her interest in horticulture was budding.

“I used to sit in courtrooms waiting for my case to be called, looking through gardening catalogs and dreaming about what I wanted to do at home,” recalled McGinnis. “I was asking myself, what do I want to be when I grow up? Which is a funny question to be asking when you’re in your thirties.”

Burnt out and looking for a new direction, McGinnis enrolled as master’s student, and eventually a Ph.D. student in horticultural science. Still, McGinnis could not completely escape her legal background. Part of her graduate studies involved work on federal regulation of genetically modified crops, a project funded through an interdisciplinary graduate fellowship. McGinnis also had the opportunity help run an online component of the Master Gardener program with her co-advisor, Dr. Mary Meyer.

“The [Master Gardener] program was just full of terrific people who were passionate about learning,” remembered McGinnis. “I was hoping I’d be able to work with a Master Gardener program again. When I saw the job opening at NDSU, my heart just started to pound. It fit my qualifications, plus it was back in my home state.”

McGinnis got the job—she is currently serving as an assistant professor and horticulture extension specialist at North Dakota State University, where she coordinates horticultural programs in the eastern half of North Dakota and oversees the North Dakota Master Gardener program. Her research focuses on the propagation and use of natives in the horticultural landscape.

“I had no idea I would end up there,” admits McGinnis, “but I’m mighty glad it happened!”

Students Explore England’s School and Community Gardens

Last March, a class of eleven students, led by Dr. Mary Meyer, set off on a nine-day adventure to learn about school and community gardens in England. Students attended a weekly course on campus throughout spring semester where they learned about successful school gardens in the U.S. and formed connections with local teachers and organizers. Then the group traveled to England, a longtime leader in sustainable community gardening, where they toured four school gardens, as well as Kew Gardens, and took part in the UK Growing Schools conference. The students also had the opportunity to present and receive feedback about gardens in the U.S.

“The trip was a perfect fit for my interests in horticulture and nonprofit outreach,” said student Rebecca Gross. “I learned a lot about best practices for school gardening, and I saw that sometimes it only takes a few really passionate and persistent people to make things happen.”

Upon returning home, students worked with their local partner schools to develop activities and recommendations for improving their gardens based on what students learned in England. Online conferences were also held to continue the sharing of ideas after the experience abroad faded. This spring, a new group of students will have the opportunity to make the trip and further the conversation from last year.
Innovation.

High Schoolers Explore Careers in Science through Project SEED

Jiaoyang Li (left) is a step ahead of many of her peers. Currently a freshman at the U of M, Li has been honing her research skills working in a horticultural science laboratory since she was a junior in high school.

Li is one of nine students last year who participated in Project SEED—a program administered by the American Chemical Society (ACS) that gives high school students, especially those from diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, a unique opportunity to conduct hands-on research. The program places students in academic, industrial, or governmental laboratories for eight to ten weeks during the summer under the supervision of a volunteer mentor.

Dr. Paul Boswell has been coordinating a Project SEED chapter at the U of M for the last few years.

“It’s a great program,” says Boswell. “Most of the students that come in haven’t had much exposure to science, other than maybe a couple of classes. They get a lot more confidence through the program and feel more comfortable joining a college and going into a scientific field.”

If it weren’t for Project SEED, I would have had no idea how to get in a lab. Now, I get to do real scientific research!

-Jiaoyang Li, Project SEED Alum

Boswell mentioned that several high schoolers in the program were afraid to apply to more selective colleges, but with mentoring from faculty and staff involved in the program, students were successfully admitted. Many have even received generous scholarships.

Since Boswell began coordinating Project SEED, the program has grown from only one or two students to the nine who were involved last year in Chemistry and Horticultural Science. Boswell hopes that the program will be able to support even more students next year.

“It’s a great way for scientific organizations to become more integrated with the community,” Boswell notes. “It also helps to ensure that we’ll have more skilled scientists working in the future.”

Project SEED has been made possible through generous support from 3M and ACS. The program is seeking additional partnerships with local businesses and organizations interested in growing Project SEED and our community of scientific professionals. For more information, visit www.acs.org/projectseed or contact Dr. Paul Boswell at bosw0011@umn.edu.

Student Spotlight: Creating Edible Oases in a Food Desert

Graduate student Clemon Dabney III is growing food in the desert. Over the past several months, Dabney has been working with Neighbors Organizing for Change to improve food access by installing edible landscapes and community gardens in areas where fresh produce is hard to come by—regions known as food deserts, which include both the Minneapolis and St. Paul campuses.

“The big picture is to allow those who want to grow their own food the opportunity to do so and for those without the time, ability, or resources to harvest their own fresh and diverse produce for free,” said Dabney. “I’ve always felt a need to serve, and I’ve wanted to find a way to use my talents and interests to better my community.”

Dabney was awarded a Buckman Fellowship from the U of M College of Design for his work. The fellowship is an initiative for the study and practice of philanthropy, leadership, and personal and community improvement. In addition to his work in the greater community, Dabney has also shown his leadership abilities through service to the university. He currently serves as Vice President of the Horticulture Club, Senator for the Council of Graduate Students, and Treasurer for both the Applied Plant Sciences Graduate Club and the Natural Resources Association of Graduate Students.

Dabney is a master’s student in Applied Plant Sciences with an emphasis on Plant Breeding and Molecular Genetics. He is pursuing an academic career in plant breeding research and/or teaching. He plans to continue his philanthropic work spreading edible landscapes into the future.

Above: Nine students participated in Project SEED at the U of M this year.

Above: Clemon Dabney III works with volunteers to ready the ground for a new community garden.
Excellence.

Meet New Faculty in the Department of Horticultural Science

Mary Rogers, Ph.D., began her career at the University of Minnesota with a bachelor’s degree in Environmental Horticulture and a master’s degree in Entomology. She completed a Ph.D. at the University of Tennessee, where she combined her interests to focus on plant, soil, and insect relationships and Integrated Pest Management. Most recently, Dr. Rogers has served as a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Tennessee, where her research has centered around biologically-based strategies for pest management, season extension using high tunnels, and cover cropping for soil fertility. She is most interested in finding sustainable, low-input ways for fruit and vegetable growers to increase the productivity and quality of those products.

Julie Grossman, Ph.D. also spent part of her educational career at the University of Minnesota, earning her master’s degree in Soil Science with a graduate minor in Sustainable Agriculture. She later completed her Ph.D. at the University of Minnesota in Agronomy and Plant Genetics. Dr. Grossman served as a postdoctoral researcher in the Departments of Crop and Soil Science and Horticulture at Cornell University and has most recently worked as an assistant professor at North Carolina State University. Her research focuses on how soil management techniques that are commonly used on organic farms, such as the use of legume cover crops, can be used to promote nutrient cycling and soil biological activity. She also has a strong interest in international agriculture. She was honored as a Fulbright Scholar in 1999 for her work in Chiapas, Mexico and has been involved in several international agricultural research efforts in countries such as Brazil and Africa since.

“I love working with students who are passionate about sustainable agriculture and understanding how the food system works. I am excited to work with the dedicated faculty and students that helped bring the Food Systems major to life.”

- Julie Grossman, Ph.D.

Horticultural Science Student Awardees, 2013-2014 School Year

The following undergraduate students were awarded at least one scholarship at the Kermit Olson Scholarship Ceremony:

Mitchell Allen, Spencer Barriball, Laurine Berg, Jacob Deaver, Ryan Gavin, Sarah Gesare, Rebecca Gross, Laura Hayes, Jenny Heck, Alisha Hershman, Victoria Housewright, Katie Janke, Emmi Klarer, Jennifer Lavalley, Katelyn Lepinski, Lotus Lofgren, Angela Lillemo, Janean Lukes, Morgan Mangelson, Katherine Noren, Korbin Paul, Patrick Pearson, Mitchal Peterson, Brian Personius, Erin Pfarr, Nik Prenevost, Maggie Reiter, Zachary Roth, Daniel Rude, Aidan Shaughnessy, Caleb Simon, Ryland Sorenson, Rebecca Splichal, Susan Storck, Alexander Susko, Kristen Waurio, Bailey Webster, Mark Wilson

The following graduate students were awarded a scholarship/fellowship:

Jennifer Boldt, Jing Chen, Matthew Clark, Jamie Dorman, Aimee Doyle, Cabdulqadair Faarax, Puspa Ghimire, Luke Haggerty, Madeline Leslie, Randall Sanderson, Peng Yu

Thank you to our generous donors for the following scholarships and fellowships that were awarded:

Arthur E. Hutchins Scholarship
ASHS Collegiate Scholars Awards
ASHS Outstanding Undergraduate Dale & Ingebor Smith Scholarship
Daniels Fellowship in Horticulture
Edgar & Arlene Graupman Scholarship
Gideon Memorial Scholarship
Howard E. Kaerwer Scholarship

Jennifer Kohn Memorial Scholarship
Leon C. Snyder Scholarship
MN Garden Flower Scholarship
MN Nursery and Landscape Assn. Scholarship
Phil & Mary Allen Scholarship
Richard A. Hamilton Scholarship
Soil & Sunshine Garden Club Scholarship
St. Anthony Park Garden Club Scholarship
Thomas M. & Drusilla Paist McGill Scholarship
Trans-Mississippi Golf Assn. Scholarship
Vincent K. Bailey Scholarship
Wagner’s Greenhouse Scholarship
William F. & Hella Mears Hueg Landscape Arboretum Research Fellowship
William H. Alderman Memorial Scholarship

“I have a real passion and enthusiasm for what I do that helps drive my research objectives and keeps me motivated. My hope is that this comes across in my teaching and outreach activities with students and growers.”

- Mary Rogers, Ph.D.
From the Department Head…

After a year away on sabbatical leave, I am pleased to be back and serving another year as the department head. The Department of Horticultural Science is a dynamic place to be! This year, we are playing a key role in the implementation of two new interdisciplinary majors: Food Systems and Plant Sciences. The majors will meet a growing demand among students to learn about the complex challenges facing horticulture today and help prepare them with the scientific skills and problem-solving capabilities to craft viable solutions. I am delighted to announce the hire of two new faculty members to help support the majors, and I anticipate they will bring valuable new strengths to the department. Our research labs continue to make important contributions to the field and provide students with hands-on learning opportunities. I invite you to visit any of our regular Horticultural Science Seminars (Wednesdays, 3:30-4:30pm, Alderman Hall 310) to learn about recent research efforts and to socialize with faculty, staff, and students. I also encourage you to reach out and support the department so we can continue to attract the best students through scholarships and research opportunities. Finally, please mark your calendar for April 9 to attend our annual Kermit Olson Scholarship Lecture and Reception. I look forward to connecting with many of our alumni this year!

Best Wishes to Jeff Gillman!

After fifteen years of outstanding service, Associate Professor Jeff Gillman has left the Department of Horticultural Science. Jeff started here in 1998 as an Assistant Professor. Over the years he taught courses in nursery management, pesticides, plant production, and plant propagation. His research and outreach has focused on everything from testing products and production systems for nursery growers to debunking myths and misconceptions about home gardening and organic versus inorganic garden products and practices. Jeff was continuously innovative in his teaching, outreach, and research, and he created a work environment that fostered growth and personal and professional development. He was a great collaborator and encouraged many new professional partnerships and collaborative endeavors within the university as well as throughout the industry. Jeff is currently an instructor at Central Piedmont Community College in Charlotte, NC, where he teaches four different horticulture courses.

Dr. Emily Hoover
Professor & Head

New Staff Welcome the following staff who recently began working in the department:
• Daniel Abate Pella, postdoc
• Mario Gagliardi, junior scientist
• Jayanti Suressh, scientist
• Jack Tillman, junior scientist
• Samantha Grover, communications assistant
• Stephen Brockman, junior scientist
• Calvin Peters, junior scientist

Congratulations
Neil Anderson was promoted to Full Professor, and Adrian Hegeman was promoted to Associate Professor.

Jerry Cohen received the U of M Award for Outstanding Contributions to Postbaccalaureate, Graduate, and Professional Education. Professors who have received this award constitute the membership of the Academy of Distinguished Teachers.

Emily Hoover received the President’s Award for Outstanding Service, which recognizes exceptional service to the University, its schools, colleges, departments, and service units.

Vince Fritz was awarded the ASHS Outstanding Extension Educator award, which recognizes an educator who has made an outstanding and valuable contribution to horticultural science extension education for ten or more years.

Several staff and faculty members received awards at the Borealis Night of Excellence. Congratulations to Stan Hokanson (Outstanding Club Advisor), Neil Anderson (Outstanding Professor), Christian Thill (Outstanding Professor), and Evonne Kuyper (Outstanding Professional Staff Member).

Paul Boswell was awarded a $1.6 mil NIH grant for research involving plant molecule identification and modeling.

Eric Watkins, along with researchers from Rutgers University and the University of Wisconsin, was awarded a $2.13 mil USDA grant to develop fine fescue cultivars for professional turfgrass managers and homeowners.

Bill Peters and Mike Wilson both got married (not to each other!).

Chad Giblin started a new position as a Research Fellow in the U of M Department of Forest Resources.

After a year away on sabbatical leave, I am pleased to be back and serving another year as the department head. The Department of Horticultural Science is a dynamic place to be! This year, we are playing a key role in the implementation of two new interdisciplinary majors: Food Systems and Plant Sciences. The majors will meet a growing demand among students to learn about the complex challenges facing horticulture today and help prepare them with the scientific skills and problem-solving capabilities to craft viable solutions. I am delighted to announce the hire of two new faculty members to help support the majors, and I anticipate they will bring valuable new strengths to the department. Our research labs continue to make important contributions to the field and provide students with hands-on learning opportunities. I invite you to visit any of our regular Horticultural Science Seminars (Wednesdays, 3:30-4:30pm, Alderman Hall 310) to learn about recent research efforts and to socialize with faculty, staff, and students. I also encourage you to reach out and support the department so we can continue to attract the best students through scholarships and research opportunities. Finally, please mark your calendar for April 9 to attend our annual Kermit Olson Scholarship Lecture and Reception. I look forward to connecting with many of our alumni this year!

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Who: Alumni & friends related to the green industries from several institutions of higher education (U of M Twin Cities, U of M Crookston, University of Wisconsin River Falls, South Dakota State University, Hennepin Technical College)

What: An evening of socializing and networking following the first day of the Northern Green Expo

When: Thursday, January 10 4:30-6:30pm

Where: Minneapolis Convention Center (1301 2nd Ave. S., Minneapolis), Season’s Rotunda reception area

RSVP is not required, but appreciated.

For more information, visit:
http://www.cfans.umn.edu/AlumniFriends/Events/NGE.