Herbalists: This fall, students of Hort 5012: Common Chinese Medicinal Plants: Growing and Processing took a trip to Hsu’s Ginseng Farm in Wassau, WI. The group learned how to grow, harvest, manage, and market ginseng and ginseng products using Hsu’s Ginseng Farm as a model.

INSIDE:
Horticulture. A culture of...
Creativity.
Alum Dan Peterson brings life, function, and beauty to metro-area yards through HabAdapt.

Innovation.
Alicia Rihn, a current Ph.D. student, uses eye tracking to discover keywords food buyers look for.

Excellence.
Students and colleagues remember Professor Bud Markhart.

Community.
April 26 we are celebrating the 125th anniversary of the department and the 100th anniversary of the weekly seminar series.
Alumni Spotlight: Designing Beautiful and Nutrient-Rich Living Spaces

Between getting an undergraduate degree at the University of Minnesota and getting his Master of Agriculture degree in 2003, Daniel Peterson has tried on a lot of different hats. “I worked with a variety of companies, from designing to growing to hardscapes,” said Daniel. “Getting my Master’s degree opened up a different path, something more sustainable.” The path it opened was starting up his own Twin Cities-based landscaping business in 2005 called HabAdapt.

Every HabAdapt design starts with three basic tenets: life, function, and beauty. While working on his Master’s, Dan realized that much of his work focused on adapting home spaces into friendly habitats for local wildlife such as plants, insects, and birds. Using old world construction techniques with current knowledge of natural community restoration, Dan began to create spaces that were not only beautiful, but thriving beds of life. In addition, his designs are as long term and sustainable as possible while still being a functional area for the homeowners.

The beauty of Dan’s work speaks for itself; almost all of his new business is from referrals, with some of his first customers being previous co-workers and contacts developed at the University. He works closely with his customers to create designs that reflect who they are and what they enjoy, with a focus on the quality of his work and teaching the home owner about what he’s doing. Rather than note the monetary success of his company, he views his biggest successes to be when people who refer to themselves as “black thumbs” start to take ownership of their space and want to be a part of it.

Dan’s education didn’t stop after he got his Master’s degree. On top of using knowledge gained from his previous jobs, Dan regularly updates his education to keep improving his techniques. “You have to continue your education through seminars and classes so you can keep bringing new things to your clients. You have to try new things. Don’t limit yourself; figure out how to do it better.” With a solid foundation and a drive to keep bettering his techniques, HabAdapt will continue to provide life, function, and beauty to homes across the metro area.

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Class Creates Floral Grave Blanket Honoring Hurricane Sandy Victims

Traditional grave blankets in the United States began in the Midwest, brought overseas by Scandinavian immigrants. The blankets are usually created in the fall or winter when flowers are not available to decorate the grave of a loved one. Associate Professor Neil Anderson’s Floral Design course takes the idea a step further by using grave blankets to honor specific sympathy events such as the Mexican Day of the Dead, the 35W Bridge Collapse, the death of Michael Jackson, and—this year—the victims of Hurricane Sandy. Each panel was created and designed by an undergraduate student team: the left panel represents the boardwalk and carnival on the New Jersey shore; the central panel is the Doppler radar map of the area after Hurricane Sandy hit the shore; and the right panel shows Lady Liberty surrounded by eddies, representing the chaotic destruction surrounding the Manhattan area. To learn more and see other pictures, visit http://z.umn.edu/graveblanket2012. ♦
Innovation.

Student Spotlight: Discovering What Sells a Product

What do you look at when you buy food? Do you want something that’s grown in the U.S., or maybe it’s more important that it’s organic? Would you pay more for that product? These are the questions that Alicia Rihn, a Ph.D. student with a horticultural marketing emphasis under associate professor Chengyan Yue, is looking to answer with the aid of an eye tracking study.

The idea for the study began with her Master’s thesis, where Alicia investigated the decline in cut flower purchases among Generation X and Y consumers. From there she noticed a particular interest in longevity labels and guarantees, and that they could affect the perceived value of a product. In essence, even if consumers were skeptical about the ability to guarantee something like a cut flower, simply having the guarantee showed the company’s confidence in their product. If a guarantee made people value the product more, then what effect did other labels have on purchasing decisions?

The study used three different items to answer this question—peanuts, salad, and apple juice—which had different labels on them denoting origin, production method, and nutrient content claims. For instance, the salad in the picture below claims that it is produced in the U.S.A. and that it’s organic, or the apple juice might claim to have extra vitamin C. Participants then sat down at a computer to look over the products and submit a bid. The computer tracked where their eyes moved over the picture and for how long they rested on a spot. To avoid mental inflation, where someone claims they would spend more on a product than they actually would, participants could actually win the products they were bidding on.

Alicia is still sifting through the data of her study to find correlations, but initial glances provide interesting information. For instance, “The organic label is important to consumers,” Alicia says, “but they don’t look at it for long. That could be because it’s easy to recognize.” She is still looking to see if there are any correlations between the participants’ bids and their visual attention, but results are still pending. Her research will ultimately help producers know what their consumers are looking for, and if they’ll pay more for it.

Redesign of Alderman 405 Brings Technology to the Classroom

Over winter break, 405 Alderman Hall got a complete remodel to make it one of the snazziest rooms on the Saint Paul campus. It’s a large space—in the future it will seat over 100 people—but the design makes learning easy from any spot in the room.

Four speakers hang from the ceiling along with four microphones, which can be used with conference calls to make sure students can be heard from nearly anywhere in the room. In the back are two 55” LCD monitors which have the same display as the projection screen at the front of the room. To facilitate distance and online learning opportunities, a PTZ camera and digital encoder can simultaneously record a lecture and a computer presentation.

The new additions will allow professors to bring new ideas and creativity to their classes. Thank you to everyone who made this possible.
When Professor Albert “Bud” Markhart started with the Horticultural Science Department in 1979, he worked in the Laboratory for Plant Hardiness studying water movement in plants growing under adverse conditions. Nearly 33 years later though, Bud was far better known for his work in sustainability, organic horticulture, and—most importantly—his passion and commitment to his students. Sadly, on June 26, 2012 he passed away after a long battle with melanoma. However, few people make as much of an impact on the people around them as Bud did, and he will be sorely missed by the people whose lives he touched.

It was in the early ‘90s that Bud discovered his exceptional talent with students and turned his teaching efforts towards sustainable and organic farming systems, putting him on the forefront of an area that was growing in popularity. Over the next fifteen years he sparked an interest in organic production systems among his students and expanded the opportunities in this emerging field of study at the University. In addition to teaching about organic and sustainable horticulture production through classes at all levels, in 2004 Bud helped to launch Cornercopia, the student organic farm, to give students a hands-on opportunity with organic farming. One of the most notable aspects of Bud’s teaching style was his desire to connect with his students on a personal level. A former advisee, Pamela Sanders, says of Bud, “He changed my life. I met him as an undergrad, and he convinced me I could be a grad student, and mentored me through that long process of becoming a confident professor and good scientist.”

His work went farther than the classroom though. Bud was a staple within the organic community. Some of the organizations he worked with were the Minnesota Food Association, Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture, and Dreams of Wild Health. He understood that there was rarely just one answer for a problem, and that working with and learning from the community was the key to making a vibrant learning experience for all. Whether someone was an expert in their field, a returning learner, or a child just figuring out how plants grow, Bud connected with them.

Even something as difficult as cancer couldn’t keep Bud Markhart from spreading his enthusiasm to others. “He earned the highest teaching award presented by the University of Minnesota, the Morse Alumni Teaching Award, a couple of years ago,” says colleague Jeff Gillman. “But the fact that he taught a class this past spring despite his illness reveals more about his commitment to students than any award could.” His commitment to students will endure through the Markhart Organics Endowment Fund. Bud’s legacy lives on in his wife Beth and their two children, Ben and Bryan, and a piece of him continues inside all the lives he has touched.

He had boundless enthusiasm for what we studied, which in turn made me more enthusiastic. He was stellar at what he did and the world deserved to have him in it a little longer.

-Megan Juneau, Student

Bud’s determination to enjoy life and see the best in any situation and person enveloped everything he said and did.

-Stan Hokanson, Colleague

Top: Bud trains students at Big River Farms. Bottom left: Bud and his students at his 60th birthday party. Bottom right: Bud eagerly shows off his squash.
Community.

April 26: Celebrating 125 Years of Hort & 100 Years of Weekly Seminars

2013 marks two historic occasions within the Department of Horticultural Science: the 125th anniversary of the department and the 100th anniversary of our weekly seminar series.

In 1888 the Department of Horticultural Science was formed. Over the last 125 years our department has been improving the quality of life for Minnesotans and impacting the economy of the state through breeding, research, outreach, and education. Our alumni travel all over the world to research and lead in the advancement of horticulture.

The Horticultural Science Weekly Seminars began on January 13, 1913 and was first organized “to bring together students and faculty members interested in horticulture for general discussions of the literature and the problems pertaining to this field of work.” For the first two years a strict record was kept noting the seminar topic, the fruit tasted that week, and everyone who attended. This record gives us an invaluable insight into what was pressing at the time and what continues to be a problem even 100 years later. It is estimated that over 2,078 seminars have been presented on a variety of topics, from pest problems to marketing and more.

To celebrate these historic milestones, the department is hosting an all-day celebration at the Snyder Auditorium at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum. The event will take place on April 26 from 9:00am-7:30pm and will have guest speakers, historic summaries from current faculty and their lineage of students, and numerous chances for reminiscing about past events, research findings, teaching highlights, and extension landmarks in our bountiful history. All alumni and friends of the department are invited, and the event is free. For a complete list of events and to RSVP for planning purposes, please visit http://z.umn.edu/hortanniversary.

Though outside it is cold and snowy, the outstanding work in the Department of Horticultural Science never stops. My last six months as department head have been challenging, but also incredibly rewarding, and exciting events are on the horizon this spring.

On April 26 the Horticulture Department is celebrating its 125th anniversary, as well as the 100th anniversary of our weekly seminar series, with an all-day, free event at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum. This is a milestone that would not have been possible without our alumni and donors. While this is a momentous occasion for the department, this event is also to celebrate you—where you came from, what you did, and where you’re going—and we hope to see you there. At the celebration a time capsule will be filled and sealed for the next 100 years, and we need your help to fill it. Please bring an item, which can be nostalgic from your time within the department or a symbol of what you’re doing now, to place into the time capsule. This is a chance to not only reconnect with colleagues, friends, and mentors, but to put your personal touch on history.

In addition, don’t forget about our annual Kermit Olson scholarship lecture; this year features Dr. Jodie Holt, who was the plant biology consultant on Avatar. I hope to see many of you at both of these events; without you we wouldn’t be the department we are today.

Dr. Brian Horgan
Professor & Interim Department Head

New Staff
Welcome the following staff who recently began working in the department:
- Dana Freund, postdoctoral researcher
- Sanjay Gupta, research fellow
- Lindsey Hoffman, postdoctoral researcher
- Andrzej Noszewski, research fellow
- Echo Martin, communications
- He Miao, a visiting scholar from China
- Alison Pawlus, postdoctoral researcher
- Calvin Peters, junior scientist
- Shen Man, a visiting scholar from China
- Nathan Tivendale, postdoctoral researcher
- Mi-Kyoung Won, a visiting scholar from South Korea

Congratulations
This fall, Changbin Chen was promoted to a tenure-track Assistant Professor.

Professor Susan Galatowitsch is the new Department Head of Fisheries, Wildlife, and Conservation Biology.

Professor Mary Meyer was elected President of the American Society for Horticultural Science.

Staff member Doug Brinkman and his wife welcomed their first child into the world on November 19, 2012. At birth, Eddie was 7 pounds, 11 ounces and 21 inches.
Kermit Olson Lecture: March 27!

Each year the Department puts thousands of dollars toward promoting the education of the next generation of plant professionals. We couldn’t do this without the generous support of our alumni and friends within the horticulture community. Thank you for your generosity and the legacy you have created.

Now, please join us to celebrate! We would be honored for you to help us recognize our students and hear from our featured speaker, Jodie Holt.

Kermit Olson 2013
Scholarship Award Presentation and Lecture
Featuring: Dr. Jodie Holt, University of California-Riverside
“What Hollywood Can Teach Us About Our Planet”

March 27 at 3:30PM, in 110 Green Hall
1530 Cleveland Avenue N
St. Paul, MN 55108

The event is free and open to the public. Hope to see you there!
Find out more at http://z.umn.edu/kermitolson.