

UARK HORTICULTURE SPRING NEWSLETTER



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NOTE FROM THE DEPT. HEAD

Greetings from the Department of Horticulture

This year started off as a busy, productive year for Horticulture, and it is hard to believe that the spring semester has come to a close here on campus. Faculty and staff were presenting at several meetings and webinars, conducting workshops and trainings, supporting farm tours, and carrying out research in the winter and early spring. Students participated in national quiz bowls, presented at regional and national scientific meetings, published articles and fact sheets, and are participating in summer internships, research, study abroad programs and classes, and/or jobs.

Commencement was Friday, May 9 and we congratulated several students for completing their degrees! As we head into the summer field season, we recognize the department's outstanding students, including award recipients in the department and through the American Society for Horticultural Science and scholarship recipients. In this addition, you will find research and extension updates and links to more in-depth stories, students news, and upcoming field days. Thank you for being part of the Department of Horticulture and for continued support of our students, staff, and faculty.

- MARY SAVIN

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MAY 9- BUMPERS COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY

HORTICULTURE TEACHING GARDENS RENOVATION PROJECT

This spring, our department had the opportunity to participate as one of 22 selected initiatives in the One Day, One U of A campaign. This event is a 24-hour crowdfunding day to support grassroots projects across campus. Through the Horticulture Teaching Gardens Renovation project, we hope to be able to renovate and enhance our landscape spaces with the help of donations from our supporters. On April 10, 2025 we launched our project through the One Day, One U of A campaign. With the help of our generous supporters, we were able to raise over \$4000 to get us started! Thank you to everyone who donated and supported our efforts.

While the campaign may be over, our work is just getting started. We will have two students interning and one working on a project all summer. If you are interested in supporting this project, you can still make a donation at any time. Go to our online giving page and make a note designating your donation to our horticulture teaching gardens. We look forward to sharing progress in our August newsletter!



HORTIFRUIT AND UADA COLLABORATE FOR THORNLESS BLACKBERRY RESEARCH

Hortifrut, the leading global business platform in the world for the production and commercialization of berries, will be participating in a groundbreaking scientific publication that introduces the world's first publicly available diagnostic markers for prickly-free (thornless) blackberries, a major step forward for blackberry breeding globally.

Developed in collaboration with the University of Arkansas Department of Horticulture and the USDA-ARS breeding program in Oregon, this research provides powerful tools that allow breeders to identify and select thornless plants early in the breeding process – saving valuable time, resources, and effort. This is one of many examples highlighting department collaborations with industry and external stakeholders.

We want to give special recognition to Hortifrut's Ellen Thompson, Global Rubus Breeding & Development Director, who contributed to the publication alongside lead author Margaret Worthington and a team of experts committed to advancing blackberry genetics. Ellen was also our 2025 Bogle Distinguished Lecturer this spring.



MARGARET WORTHINGTON &
ELLEN THOMPSON

This milestone builds on decades of progress:

- 1964: Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station blackberry breeding program founded
- 1989: First prickly-free variety ('Navaho') released
- 2025: First markers for prickles published and made public



RESEARCH & EXTENSION HIGHLIGHTS

Worthington Wins a Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers

Dr. Margaret Worthington received one of the highest honors given by the United States government following a nomination in association with a blackberry breeding project supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

Vegetable and Fruit Growers News recognized Aaron Cato with 40 under 40 award

Fruit and Vegetable News has recognized Arkansas Extension Horticulture Specialist Dr. Aaron Cato by including him in its 40 under 40 Award.

How to Restore a Lawn Full of Weeds

Dr. Hannah Wright-Smith provides expert insight on how to reduce a weed-infested lawn by addressing underlying issues such as compacted soil, poor drainage, and improper mowing or watering practices.

[Check out the UADA Extension page for more lawn care Info.](#)

Four Webinars Set for Root Zone Management in Controlled-Environment Agriculture

Dr. Ryan Dickson co-founded Root Alliance, which connects researchers and industry stakeholders to develop research-based, sustainable solutions centered on root zone management. This summer webinar series will cover four topics: understanding risks of low-quality water and water treatment design, customizing recirculated hydroponic solutions, cold plasma and ozone for water sanitation, and stratified substrates in container nursery crops.

Sustainability and Composting in Action

Follow Dr. Matt Bertucci as he provides insight on home composting strategies and techniques, improving soil health practices on Arkansas specialty crop farms, small farm sustainability and viability, and more. For more information about composting, see the [UADA Cooperative Extension composting page](#).

High Tunnel Production in Arkansas

Learn all things high tunnel with resources such as handouts and about upcoming events from High Tunnel and Urban Agriculture Instructor, Taunya Ernst.

Faculty Honored at Provost's Faculty Recognition Event

Dr. Hannah Wright-Smith is recognized for completing a workshop focused on best practices in mentoring to inspire, direct and professionally develop graduate mentees.

Soilless Production of Long-Cane Blackberries

Working with Dr. Amanda McWhirt, Extension's fruit and vegetable horticulture specialist, Dr. Dickson is evaluating innovative, soilless, long-cane production techniques funded through a \$750,000 USDA NIFA grant.

Pecan Scab Hours Website Lets Producers Know When It's Time to Spray

Jackie Lee, Director of the Fruit Research Station, developed the Pecan Scab Hours website based on several years of research in Arkansas.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

DISCOVER MORE

Want to read the latest news on our research and extension efforts? Check out UADA pages for more stories, highlights, videos, and podcasts.

Click on the links below:

[Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station](#)

[Commercial Horticulture in Arkansas](#)
[Arkansas Local Foods](#)

[Arkansas Master Gardeners Program](#)

[Center For Arkansas Farms and Foods](#)

[Arkansas Turfgrass Information Page](#)

[The Arkansas Garden](#)

[The Department of Horticulture](#)



WHERE TO FIND US

Instagram: @uarkhorticulture

Facebook: Uark Horticulture

Twitter (X): @uarkhort

LinkedIn: University of Arkansas
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STUDENTS AND FACULTY

2025 American Society for Horticultural Science
Outstanding Graduate Student
Isabella Vaughn

2025 Corliss Knapp Engle Scholarship in Horticulture-
Garden Club of America
Isabella Vaughn

Horticulture Outstanding Undergraduate Student
Hayden Hawthorne

Vaile-Watts Outstanding Senior
Sawyer Henderson

Horticulture Outstanding Masters Student
Sam Kreinberg

Horticulture Outstanding PhD Student
Sharandeep Singh Chahal

Southern Weed Science Society Second Place MS
Student Oral Presentation
Sam Kreinberg

American Society for Horticultural Science Three
Minute Thesis Winner in Southern Small Fruit Meeting
Amanda Lay Walters

American Society for Horticultural Science Second
Place in Undergraduate Paper Competition
Rhys Brock

Pi Alpha Xi Honor Society
**Brett Applegate, Ann Bell, Hayden Hawthorne,
Brighton Hunt, and Vanessa Patton**

Spring 2025 Graduating MS Student
Josh Tebow

American Society for Horticultural Science First Place
in MS Paper Competition
Claire Plassmeyer

American Society for Horticultural Science Second Place in PhD
Competition
Alexander Silva

American Society for Horticultural Science Third Place PhD
Competition
Katie Lust-Moore

American Society for Horticultural Science Third Place
Outstanding Club
UofA Hort Club

Trifecta Award- Presented by Peaks & Prairies Golf Course
Superintendents Association chapter, Inland Empire Golf
Course Superintendents Association chapter, and Idaho Golf
Course Superintendents Association chapter.
Dr. Wendell Hutchens

Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists
& Engineers (PECASE)
Dr. Margaret Worthington

Arkansas Turfgrass Association Incoming Turf Student
Scholarship
Seth Ford

Arkansas Turfgrass Association Outstanding
Intern Scholarship
Hayden Hawthorne

Spring 2025 Graduating Undergraduate Students
**Annabelle Denham, Charles Whitten, Mercedes
Souders, Larissa Morley, Sara McCown, Paige
Gancarczyk, Sawyer Henderson, Hanna Cravens,
Benjamin Morgan, Morgan Humphrey, Maximus
Emerson, Megan Jo Daily, Madeline Fourt, Thatcher
Stafford, Elizabeth Katelyn Bishop**



Hayden Hawthorne



Wendell Hutchens



Rhys Brock, Katie Lust-Moore, & Alexander Silva

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Spring 2025 Events

01/09/2025- SE Regional Fruit & Vegetable Conference

- Savannah, GA

01/16/2025- AR Turfgrass Association Conference

- Hot Springs, AR

01/20/2025- Southern Weed Science Society Meeting

- Charleston, SC

01/21/2025- AR Crop Management Conference

- Little Rock, AR

01/30/2025- Arkansas Grown Conference & Expo

- Hot Springs, AR

01/31/2025- Southern Region ASHS Meeting

- Irving, TX (American Society for Horticulture Science)

02/03/2025- GCSSA Conference & Tradeshow

- San Diego, CA (Golf Course Superintendents Association of America)

02/11/2025- SRIPS Conference

- Montgomery, AL (Southern Region Integrated Produce Safety)

04/03/2025- Bogle Entrepreneurship Lecture

- Fayetteville, AR (Dept. Student Awards/Guest Speaker)

04/17/2025- Bumpers Honors & Awards Banquet

- Fayetteville, AR

04/22/2025- AR Blackberry Growers Association

UADA Field Day

- Judsonia, AR

04/29/2025- Strawberry Field Day

- Kibler, AR (Research Walkthrough)

05/09/2025- Commencement Celebration Lunch

- Fayetteville, AR

05/09/2025- Composting in Action Field Day

- Fayetteville, AR (Showcase & Informational Seminar)

05/09/2025- Bumpers Commencement

- Fayetteville, AR

05/14/2025- TOPP Organic Weed Control Workshop

- Fayetteville, AR (Transition to Organic Partnership Program)

Upcoming Events

06/05/2025- CAFF Open House

- Fayetteville, AR (Center for AR Farms & Food)

06/09/2025- Root Zone Management Webinar 1

- Online

06/10/2025- Blackberry Field Day

- Clarksville, AR (Research Walkthrough)

06/12/2025- Farmers Tomorrow Benefit

- Fayetteville, AR

06/16/2025- Root Zone Management Webinar 2

- online

06/20/2025- Master Gardener Appreciation Day

Hope, AR (Trial Gardens Open House)

07/21/2025- Root Zone Management Webinar 3

- Online

08/06/2025- Turf Field Day

- Fayetteville, AR (Research Walkthrough)

08/07/2025- Root Zone Management Webinar 4

- Online



Bogle Entrepreneurship Lecture

Left to Right: Garry McDonald, Alexander Silva, Amanda Lay, Will Green, Sam Kreinberg, Mike Battaglia, & Mary Savin



Bumpers Commencement

Annabelle Denham



ASHS Meeting

Olivia Schinker & Ann Bell



Southern Weed Science Society

Hannah Wright-Smith, Sam Kreinberg, & David Nistler

ALUMNI INFORMATION PAGE



To connect with our alumni and maintain communication of departmental research, extension, educational activities, and awards, please click on the link below and provide your contact information.

Hort Alumni Survey

The Department is also seeking nominations for outstanding alumni as candidates for alumni awards. Feel free to self-nominate or nominate a fellow alumni doing outstanding work. Email ls059@uark.edu for nominations or questions.

Go Hogs!

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT US

Want to help support our program? You can donate to our department by going to:

[Horticulture Online Giving Page.](#)

Any donations are appreciated and help support our students, academic programs, study abroad efforts, garden renovations, research extension programs, and more.



APRIL 29- STRAWBERRY FIELD DAY

Left to Right: Lizzy Herrera, Keilah Barney, Aaron Cato, Taunya Ernst, Steve Eaton, James Crotty, Summer Linn, Amanda McWhirt, & Mary Savin