



Fall Greetings from the Department of Horticulture

Hello to Horticulture faculty, staff, students, alumni, friends, and family,

I'm not sure about you, but this year has flown by for me. Similar to the rest of the year, Horticulture faculty, staff, and students have been busy. The fall semester started with the department welcoming a new instructor, Ms. Sarah Paschal, and with the departmental welcome back for students. In October, we were fortunate to honor three outstanding alumni and friends at the alumni recognition ceremony. With the involvement of students, staff, alumni, and faculty, visible renovation progress occurred in the teaching gardens. The departmental picnic took place on a beautiful evening, with many people leaving with pumpkins donated by Dr. Cato and the Vegetable Research Station. News releases highlighted some of the department's latest research and extension programs and new grants received by faculty during 2025. Amongst other meetings by departmental personnel, turfgrass students presented at the Crop Science Society of America meeting in Salt Lake City in November. Dr. McWhirt was recognized with the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture Outstanding Extension State Faculty award. For other exciting news, a new horticulture course in Greenhouse Container Crops will be holding a holiday poinsettia sale on Dec 4-5. If you did not place a pre-order, there is still time to shop during the sale. We invite you to catch up on fall semester news from the Horticulture Department in this newsletter. As always, thank you for your continued support of our students, staff, and faculty.

- Dr. Mary Savin

Department News



Horticulture Department Welcomes Newest Faculty Member, Sarah Paschal

This semester, we are excited to welcome Sarah Paschal as the newest member of our faculty. A proud alumna of our department, Sarah recently earned her master's degree this summer. She is currently teaching Principles of Horticulture and Plants, People, and You, bringing her passion and experience to the classroom. We're thrilled to have a familiar face back in the department, inspiring and mentoring the next generation of horticulture students.

Recent graduate and newest faculty, Ms. Sarah Paschal

Fall Orientation

At this year's Fall Orientation, students returned to campus with a warm welcome from the Horticulture Department. Staff members Gary Alderson and Jeff McPike fired up the grill for hot dogs and hamburgers, students grabbed free T-shirts, and faculty and student organizations introduced themselves to kick off a great semester.



Brianna Bailey, Cydney Elenbarger, Daxton Peachee, Jackson Ball & Caleb Spry (left to right)

Alumni Awards

To celebrate the achievements of our alumni and friends and the outstanding work they do, we hosted our annual Alumni Awards honoring three distinguished recipients. The event provided a meaningful opportunity for the department to reconnect with alumni, friends, and their families, while giving students the chance to meet industry professionals, learn more about career pathways in horticulture, and gain valuable guidance as they prepare to enter the field.

This year's award winners:

Distinguished Horticulture Alumni- Nick White

Horticulture Early Career Alumni- Max McKeown

Service of the Horticulture Department- Kathy Tynes



Dr. Mary Savin, Dr. Mike Richardson, Max McKeown, Kathy Tynes, Nick White, & Dr. Garry McDonald (left to right)



Dr. Mike Richardson, Seth Ford, Kathy Tynes, & Sharandeep Singh Chahal (left to right)



Will Green & Nick White (left to right)

Volunteer Day

For the first time, our department hosted a Volunteer Day—an opportunity for our community to come together and give the Horticulture Teaching Gardens a seasonal refresh with new plantings for fall, winter, and spring. Students, staff, faculty, alumni, and friends joined in for a day filled with teamwork, hands-on learning, and plenty of fun.

Among the many volunteers were Dr. Garry McDonald's Landscape Management class, Dr. Wendell Hutchens and Dr. Mike Richardson with their turf students, and Dr. Anthony Bowden, Extension Ornamentals Specialist, who helped secure several donated materials through several partner organizations.

A special thank you goes to Horticulture alumnus, Cody George, and his team at Native Restoration Management for providing tools and lending their expertise throughout the day. Their support helped make this event a success.

We extend our sincere thanks to everyone who supported our fundraiser earlier this year. Your contributions provided the supplies and materials that made these garden updates possible. We look forward to sharing our continued progress and demonstrating the impact your generosity has on our gardens.

If you are interested in supporting future garden renovations or contributing to ongoing improvements, please visit our official Horticulture Giving Page at the end of this newsletter.



Mike Battaglia & Dr. Wendell Hutchens rolling out fresh turf



Dr. Garry McDonald teaching his Landscape Management class



Joanna Gonzalez raking in the gardens





Fall Picnic

For some autumn fun, we hosted our annual Fall Picnic, where Gary Alderson and Jeff McPike grilled a delicious meal for everyone to enjoy. Pumpkins from our Kibler Farm were available for painting or taking home, and a variety of games added to the festive atmosphere. The evening was dedicated to bringing together students, staff, faculty, and alumni for a celebration of fall, community, and family-friendly fun.



2025 Horticulture Fall Picnic attendees



Alumna Regina Shoffner & her grandson

2025 Holiday Poinsettia Sale

The Department of Horticulture is excited to invite you to our first annual **2025 Holiday Poinsettia Sale**. The sale will take place on December 4-5th at our HORT Greenhouse from 9 AM to 6 PM or until sold out.

Click [here](#) for a preview and to learn more.

All plants are grown by students in the Greenhouse Container Crops course taught by Dr. Ryan Dickson. 100% of the proceeds go towards supporting next year's class and other student/teaching activities in the department.

Greenhouse and Sale Location: 1005 W. Meade St., Fayetteville, AR, 72703



Cooper Bull spraying poinsettias



Dr. Dickson's Greenhouse Crop Container Class: Daxton Peachee, Dr. Ryan Dickson, Cooper Bull (back left to right) Ann Bell, Vanessa Patton, Olivia Schinker (bottom left to right)



Great Gardens & Horticulture of Italy

The Department of Horticulture is pleased to announce an exciting study abroad opportunity: **Great Gardens & Horticulture of Italy**, scheduled for **May 11–23, 2026**. This immersive two-week program, based in Rome with excursions to additional historic and cultural sites, offers students the chance to deepen their horticultural understanding within an international context.

Faculty Leaders:

Ms. Sarah Paschal, Horticulture Instructor | sarahpaschal@uark.edu

Dr. Curt R. Rom, University Professor | crom@uark.edu

Application Deadline: January 15, 2026

For additional details, application materials, and scholarship information, please visit HogsAbroad.uark.edu

Student Internship Highlights

This past summer, our students traveled across the country to pursue a wide range of internships in the horticulture field. Our department believes that hands-on learning is one of the most valuable ways to prepare students for successful careers in horticulture. These experiences not only allow students to apply what they've learned in the classroom but also provide meaningful opportunities to network with future employers.

We encourage current students who are exploring internship possibilities to browse our recent internship highlights for inspiration and to visit the internship resources available on our departmental website.

Potential employers: If you are seeking interns for next summer and would like to offer an opportunity to our horticulture students, please contact Dr. Garry McDonald at gmcdonal@uark.edu.



Seth Ford

Location:

Shoreacres Golf Club in Lake Bluff, Illinois

Position:

Greenskeeper Intern

Job Duties:

Mowing, hand watering, spraying, course setup, rolling, and other essential duties to prepare the course for daily play



Brighton Hunt

Location:

Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens in Boothbay, Maine

Position:

Public Horticulture Intern

Job Duties:

Rotated weekly among horticulturists' spaces, assisted with planting, weeding, watering, and pruning.



Rylee Brown

Location:

Pure Seed and Pure Seed Testing, Inc. in Canby, Oregon

Position:

Research Farm Intern

Job Duties:

Mowing, conducting research on plots, harvesting grass seed, collecting and organizing data, and working with the marketing team.

Research & Extension Highlights

Perfecting Pest Control

Driven by a passion for helping farmers succeed, Dr. Aaron Cato, Associate Professor of Horticulture Integrated Pest Management (IPM), combines research and outreach to support Arkansas specialty crop farmers through smarter pest management and sustainable growing practices. In collaboration with farmers, Aaron transforms research into practical solutions that help producers meet the challenges of the day.



[Watch Here](#)

Strawberry, Blackberry, Muscadine Researchers Awarded Specialty Crop Block Grants

Grants awarded through the USDA “Specialty Crop Block” program will directly help HORT researchers and extension faculty, Drs. Aaron Cato, Amanda McWhirt, Ryan Dickson, and Food Science faculty, Dr. Renee Threlfall.”

Dr. Cato, with collaborator Dr. Amanda McWhirt, received funding to support research and outreach on an emerging disease in Arkansas-grown strawberries. Dr. Dickson received support for his research on an annual blackberry system growing primocane varieties in containers. Funds awarded to Drs. Threlfall and McWhirt will assist efforts to develop pest-management recommendations to help expand fresh-market muscadine grape production in Arkansas



[Read More](#)

Dr. Deacue Fields, Dr. Amanda McWhirt, & Dr. John Anderson

Land-Grant Recognition Founded by John W. White, Lives on 49 Years Later

To honor the legacy of John W. White, the first head of the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture—and a leader who deeply valued recognizing those who advance the land-grant mission—the Division and Bumpers College hosted its 49th annual Agriculture Awards Luncheon and ceremony.



Among this year's distinguished recipients was Dr. Amanda McWhirt, honored with the John W. White Award for Outstanding Extension State Faculty. The fruit breeding program also received recognition for its newly patented nectarine varieties.

- A-783CN, developed by John Clark, retired distinguished professor of fruit breeding, and Margaret Worthington, associate professor and fruit breeder.
- A-662CN, developed by Clark, Worthington, and the late James Moore, distinguished professor, receiving posthumous recognition.

[Read More](#)

Share Grounds Fifth Anniversary

This year, the Share Grounds program proudly celebrates its fifth anniversary. Share Grounds provides technical assistance and hands-on support to food entrepreneurs looking to launch or grow their businesses. Operated through a partnership between **Dr. Amanda Philyaw Perez's** program and the Cleveland County Fair Board, the initiative has already assisted more than 150 clients in starting and strengthening their food ventures.

The program's mission is to expand access to and consumption of local foods across Arkansas by increasing the use and capacity of fairgrounds for aggregation, distribution, and value-added product development. Share Grounds works to support local farms, create and expand opportunities for value-added food businesses, strengthen regional food economies, and improve food access in underserved communities and institutions.

Explore some of the successes that have grown from the Share Grounds program:

- Launching a restaurant in Mississippi ([Valour Taylor](#))
- Developing a value-added business in Colorado ([Jelly Madness](#))
- A Food Network celebrity spotlight (Legenia Bearden)
- [Former extension Share Grounds client wins a Food Network competition](#)
- [Little Rock chef brings family recipes to a Food Network showdown](#)



Legenia Bearden (left) recently took her culinary skills to Food Network's Family Recipe Showdown. Legenia and her aunt, Cynthia Goodman, took home the \$10,000 prize.

Events & Activities

Fall Events

August 18- First day of classes

August 26- Horticulture Fall Orientation

August 28- Bumpers Bash

September 9- Muscadine Field Day

September 25- Putt Putt Green Cup Tournament Hort/Turf Club

October 2- Horticulture Alumni Awards

October 3- Horticulture Volunteer Day

October 13-24- Fall Break

October 23- Horticulture Fall Picnic

November 9- American Society of Agronomy/Crop Science Society of America/Soil Science Society of America Tri-Societies Annual meeting

November 14- UADA Agriculture Awards

November 27-28- Thanksgiving Break

December 4/5- Holiday Poinsettia Sale

December 13- Commencement



Turf Students: Mike Battaglia, Will Green, & Hayden Hawthorne (back left to right). Seth Ford, Aaron Day, & Kaden Owens (bottom left to right)

Helpful Resources



Discover More

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

Click on the links below:

[Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station](#)

[Commercial Horticulture in Arkansas](#)

[Arkansas Master Gardeners Program](#)

[Center for Arkansas Farms and](#)

[Foods](#)

[Arkansas Turfgrass Information Page](#)

[The Arkansas Garden](#)

[The Department of Horticulture](#)

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Department of Horticulture

Alumni Information



Turf Field Day: Sharandeep Singh Chahal, Sam Kreinberg, Will Green, Brayden Dennis, Sarah Paschal, & Katie Jansson (left to right)

Stay Connected

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.

How You Can Support Us

Want to help support our program? You can donate to our department by clicking the button below. Any donations are appreciated and help support our students, academic programs, study abroad efforts, garden renovations, research and extension programs, and more.

[Hort Alumni Survey](#)

[Horticulture
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