A Note from the Department Head

For most of you this is a welcome back message, but for some of you this is a welcome to our department message. There are always new and exciting things going on in the agronomy department and I am happy to share some of those items with you.

First, I would like to describe what the department is all about. We focus on three main areas: education, research and Extension. We strive to ensure that our science addresses immediate problems and anticipates future challenges.

This academic year, we welcome 42 undergraduate and 19 graduate students into our agronomy family. I hope all of you have felt welcomed and are ready to start the semester. In the department, it is important to us that you know we care about your academic success, your opportunities outside of the classroom and your overall personal growth. This education you are working towards in the department will develop skills that transform your future, so you can make a difference in the world after graduation.

I would like to highlight our newest faculty member, Cankui Zhang, a crop physiologist. He comes to us from Cornell University where he was a research associate. His research at Purdue will focus on yield improvement, increase of nitrogen-use efficiency and long distance signaling in crop growth. We look forward to having him in the department to bridge the gap between genetics and crop management.

During this past year, the university has embarked on 10 Big Moves, one being plant sciences. This initiative targets enhancement of plant science research and education at Purdue. The College of Agriculture will receive more than $20 million in university funds to increase our plant biology faculty, transform plants to improve crops, automate plant phenotyping, and create partnerships to move intellectual property to market.

Within the past year the agronomy department has been heavily involved with this initiative. One of our faculty members, Dr. Mitch Tuinstra, was named the scientific director for the plant science research pipeline. At the Agronomy Center for Research Education, a new $10 million phenotyping building will be built to transform the 1,100 acre research farm into an outdoor laboratory. This building will be a key addition to agronomy, the college of agriculture and the university as it will bring together agronomists, geneticists, engineers and computer scientists into an interdisciplinary environment.

Best wishes on a successful semester,
Joe
Faculty and Staff Recognitions

Gary Steinhart receives North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture Judging and Student Service Award

Congratulations to Dr. Gary Steinhart for receiving the North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture Judging and Student Service Award at the annual conference in Bozeman, MT. The 2015 NACTA “Teaching on my mind” conference will be in Athens, GA June 16-20; for more details, periodically check: www.georgiacenter.uga.edu/NACTA. The 2016 conference will be in Hawaii. The College of Agriculture Office of Academic Programs will financially support faculty attendance at this conference. Inquire with dbuckmas@purdue.edu with your interest.

Pictured, from Purdue, (L to R) are Melissa Welsh, Graduate Teaching Award Merit Certificate Recipient, Dr. Steinhart, Dr. Mark Russell, Eastern Regional Director and co-nominator of Dr. Steinhart, and Elise Lofgren, Purdue Ph.D. student.

Three new Purdue Agronomy members are welcomed

Cankui Zhang is an assistant professor in crop physiology. His research at Purdue will focus on three areas. He will explore yield improvement, increases in nitrogen-use efficiency and long distance signaling in crops. He is excited to join a department where many of the members are focusing on real-world crop species.

Sue Bennett started as the Purdue Agronomy/ACRE Business Manager on June 23. She appreciates working with agronomy because of the department’s rich history of contribution to farming families in her own community and across the world.

Megan Lautenslager joined the department on August 25 as the secretary for the teaching staff. She is excited about helping students succeed in their academic career.
Agronomy Field Day at ACRE held September 5

The Agronomy Field Day at ACRE was held September 5 at the Agronomy Center for Research and Education. The Area 9 Extension Educators and Purdue Agronomy hosted the event, bringing the agronomy field day back after 10 years. This year the theme focused on management practices of a variety of crops. The 90 participants started with a free breakfast, listened to guest speakers and then participated in five tour stops. They also had the option to stay for PARP credits. The next Agronomy Field Day at ACRE will be held September 2, 2015.
Dr. Herbert Ohm retirement celebration set for September 13

All agronomy faculty, staff and students are welcome to attend Dr. Herbert Ohm’s retirement celebration on September 13 at the Beck Agricultural Center. Please RSVP here www.cvent.com/events/dr-herbert-ohm-s-retirement-celebration/registration-3bf0edd712c345dc9919de10890c2524.aspx

SAVE-THE-DATE: JOIN US FOR A RETIREMENT CELEBRATION HONORING THE LEGACY OF DR. HERBERT OHM

When: Saturday, September 13, 2014
Where: Beck Center 4540 U.S. 52 W West Lafayette, IN

Welcome to the agronomy family

Congratulations to Ron & Deb Steiner on becoming grandparents for the first time. Olivia Marie arrived July 29 and weighed 7 pounds, 7 ounces. Proud parents are Kyle and Jessica Steiner.
On Tuesday, July 15, 2014 the Purdue Turf Program, the Purdue Green Industry Working Group and the Midwest Regional Turf Foundation successfully hosted the Turf and Landscape Field Day. Jackets were needed at this year’s field day as the high temperature was 69 °F which is the coolest field day on record!

The Turf and Landscape Field Day is Indiana’s largest Green Industry field day. This was the second year with landscape research tours added. Specialists from five different departments in the College of Agriculture shared with Green Industry professionals their research findings, recommendations, as well as advice on troubleshooting problems.

It was a great opportunity for those attending to receive education, research updates, product updates and also a great opportunity to network with their colleagues and exhibitors in the Green Industry. The field day featured 41 exhibitors representing companies from around the region ranging the gamut from equipment, seed, fertilizers, pesticides, landscape plants, hardscape and more. The 513 attendees were mostly from Indiana and all its surrounding states but many national representatives were also there from various companies to learn more about Purdue’s latest green industry research.

Attendees came from a variety of backgrounds including business owners, managers and staff of wholesale and retail nurseries, landscape management firms, greenhouse growers, golf course superintendents and staff, lawn care companies, grounds maintenance departments, landscape design and installation firms, garden centers, consulting firms, educational institutions, suppliers and more! This year’s field day provided three morning research tours and four afternoon tours including a popular weed garden tour, discussion of shop maintenance and organization, and a tour of landscape research plots at the Meigs Farm.

Fourteen different speakers were at the field day including Purdue faculty/staff from Agronomy, Botany and Plant Pathology, Entomology, Horticulture and Landscape Architecture, and Forestry and Natural Resources. This year’s field day was once again a success and continues to be a leading provider of information and education among the Midwest turf professionals and the Green Industry. Mark your calendars for next year’s Turf and Landscape Field Day, July 14, 2015.
Alumni Pancake Breakfast

Before the homecoming game, Purdue Agriculture will be hosting an alumni pancake breakfast from 9-11 a.m. Agronomy will be there, stop by our booth for a chance to win a pair of men's or women's basketball tickets and catch up on current department news.