

# HORTICULTURE AND LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE



## Alumni and Friends -

I hope everyone is enjoying a lovely summer surrounded by all the beauty and nourishment horticulture and well-designed outdoor spaces can bring to our bodies and souls. I love this time of year when our Jules Janick Horticulture Garden is bursting with color, our Purdue Student Farm is starting to produce all sorts of wonderful veggies, our Extension field days are helping farmers and outdoor professionals learn new and improved techniques, and our graduate students are busy collecting data for their cutting-edge research. But I also love Fall when the hallways of the HORT building come alive with the sound of students eager to learn new skills and make lifelong friends. And Spring – let us not forget the marvels of Spring when we celebrate all our students, especially our newest alumni.

It is truly a gift to work in the Horticulture and Landscape Architecture department here at Purdue during all the seasons of the year! Our faculty and staff are extraordinary and so deeply committed to our land grant mission. Their passion constantly inspires me!

We are happy/sad to celebrate a few retirements this year. Robin Tribbett has retired after almost 49 years working to better the lives of undergraduate students in the department. At the end of summer, Dr. Mike Dana will retire; we celebrated Mike's retirement a little early when about 30 of us interrupted his final class with balloons and donuts! Dr. Cary Mitchell will be retiring at the end of the year and we will celebrate his legacy with a symposium on Friday, October 4. Please let us know if you would like to be on the invitation list for that event.

We also want to celebrate YOU and are actively soliciting nominations for Alumni Awards. Please send your nomination (could be a self-nomination!) to Colleen Flynn, [flynnck@purdue.edu](mailto:flynnck@purdue.edu), by September 15, 2024. A couple of paragraphs will suffice for the initial nomination and we will ask for more information if we need it.

Wishing you all good health and much joy,

Linda

**Linda Stalker Prokopy, Ph.D.**

*she/her/hers*

Department Head and Professor

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Horticulture and  
Landscape Architecture

## HLA ALUMNA HONORED AT DISTINGUISHED AG ALUMNI CEREMONY



HLA was delighted to celebrate our own alumna at the Distinguished Agriculture Alumni awards ceremony. **Stacy Haviland** is a 2002 graduate of our Landscape Architecture program who has had an outsized influence on the Landscape Architecture profession in Indiana through her work first with Earth Source, Inc. and now with the City of Fort Wayne, where she ensures climate change impacts are accounted for in accessible and beautiful city developments.

## PURDUE-USDA TEAM DEVELOPS FAST-TRACK PROCESS FOR GENETIC IMPROVEMENT OF PLANT TRAITS



Dr. Kranthi Varala's lab and USDA researchers have developed a web-based tool that rapidly identifies regulatory genes affecting plant traits, leveraging large datasets from various plant species. The tool uses machine learning to predict transcription factors involved in traits like seed oil biosynthesis, enabling quicker genetic improvements without extensive experiments. This approach highlights potential for broad application across different crops, enhancing research efficiency and trait optimization for agriculture and biofuel production. This work was recently published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

## LA CAREER FAIR A RESOUNDING SUCCESS



The annual landscape architecture career fair was held on February 9 in the South Ballroom of the Purdue Memorial Union. With 42 firms from 13 different states in attendance and over 300 student interviews scheduled, the event was a resounding success. The majority of firm representatives are alumni of the LA program so the event felt like a homecoming celebration.

## FREIGHT FARM CONTAINERS ARRIVE AT PURDUE STUDENT FARM



On April 29, two Freight Farm growing containers were delivered and installed at the Purdue Student Farm. Freight Farm growing containers are controlled environment agriculture systems that control all production elements, making it possible to grow produce 365 days a year. They will be used to facilitate teaching, extension, and graduate student research. We thank the generosity of the Overbeck Family Foundation for making this possible.

## UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS RECOGNIZED BY ASHS



Lauren R. Harmon was recognized as a 2024 Outstanding Undergraduate Horticulture Student by the American Society for Horticulture Science (ASHS), selected on the basis of academics, leadership, and service.

2024 ASHS Collegiate Scholars honors the academic achievements of junior and senior undergraduates in horticulture in the top 15% of their class academically. HLA students who were recognized for this award were Blake A. Belter, Gianna L. Buono, Aubrey L. Dague, Jennifer A. Flesher, Kaylee E. Guerrero, Lauren R.

Harmon, Faith M. Hartman, Ian J. Kelly, Morgan M. Klein, Camille A. Kristinik, Stephen C. Mills, and Matthew E. Smits.

## SELECT FACULTY AWARDS AND PROMOTIONS



**Dr. Kathryn Orvis**  
Fellow, Purdue Teaching Academy



**Dr. Cale Bigelow**  
Distinguished Fellow, American Society of Agronomy



**Dr. Yiwei Huang**  
Richard L. Kohls Outstanding Early Career Teaching Award



**Dr. Stephen Meyers**  
Promoted to Associate Professor

## NEW STAFF



**Justin Bryant**  
Academic IT Specialist



**Kristina Cooley**  
Graduate Program Coordinator and LA Program Assistant



**Brittany Weerts**  
Hydroponic Research Operations Administrator



**Brandy Pinkard**  
Student Support Specialist

## 2024 AWARDS RECOGNITION AND SENIOR CELEBRATION

On April 14, the department held its third annual undergraduate awards recognition and senior celebration. Outstanding students, faculty-nominated award winners, scholarship winners, club officers, HLA Ambassadors, and our May and August 2024 graduation candidates were all recognized.



Hayden Flick, recipient of the 2023-2024 Levitt Scholarship in Horticulture and Turfgrass Sciences with Mr. Barry Levitt.



**2024-2025 ASLA Academic Merit and Honor Awards (L-R):** Gabriela Nivar, Yahan You, Benjamin Henshen, and Rachael Herring.



May and August 2024 Graduation Candidates.

## HLA RESEARCH AND DESIGN RETREAT

HLA graduate students organized the HLA Research and Design Retreat, held May 9. The retreat is an opportunity for them to present their research. Department awards were announced at the end of the retreat.



**HLA Impact Awards:** Jada Powlen (Teaching Impact); Kyle Daniel (Staff Impact); Justin Bryant (Early Career); Colleen Flynn (Department Hero); Ying Li (Research Impact); Wenjing Guan (Extension Impact)

**HLA Graduate Awards:** Katherine Pivaral (Outstanding MS Research); Jeanine Arana (Outstanding Ph.D. Research); Emmanuel Cooper (Outstanding Extension); Stephen Campbell (Outstanding Teaching); Freddie Mildenhall (Outstanding Mentoring)

**Research and Design Retreat Travel Grant Winners:**  
**Masters Oral Presentation:** Katherine Pivaral (1st Place); Kathleen Zapf (2nd Place). **Masters Poster Presentation:** Emmanuel Cooper (1st Place); Jairam Danao (2nd Place). **Ph.D. Oral Presentation:** Freddie Mildenhall (1st Place); Jeanine Arana (2nd Place). **Ph.D. Poster Presentation:** Dhuha Mohamed (1st Place); George Meyer (2nd Place)

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## SUPPORT *HLA* TODAY!

### DR. MIKE DANA RETIRES



Dr. Mike Dana has been involved in undergraduate success in multiple ways since starting his career in HLA in 1982: as an instructor, as an advisor, as a scholarship coordinator, as a club advisor, as a mentor, and as a study abroad leader. He has been inducted into Purdue's Book of Great Teachers and recognized as a Legendary Leader in Study Abroad by the College's International Programs in Agriculture office. Dr. Dana oversaw the design of the Jules Janick Horticulture Garden in order to ensure the Garden optimized opportunities for undergraduate learning. Dr. Dana taught 13 unique classes over his time in the department and impacted close to 6000 students. We are so grateful for Dr. Dana's impressive work with and for students over the course of his career and wish him the very best in retirement.

### ROBIN TRIBBETT RETIRES



After almost 49 years working tirelessly to support HLA, Robin Tribbett retired on May 31. Robin served in many roles over the years. Most recently, she served as the primary recruiter for the department and met with hundreds of prospective students and their families. As a result, over the last three years, we've seen the number of applicants to the department increase from 118 a year to 172 a year

and we now have over 200 students in the department for the first time since 2011. In addition to serving as primary recruiter, Robin also coordinated special student events, including a welcome back dinner and awards night, managed scholarships, served as schedule deputy, and oversaw changes to our Plans of Study. Robin was a primary point of contact for alumni relations and our alumni all have very fond memories of their time in the department thanks to Robin. Robin will be greatly missed by all who had a chance to interact with her and benefit from her caring nature, her sharp insights into the needs of undergraduate students, and her deep commitment to our department's success.