



College of Agricultural Sciences

# Hort d'oeuvres



February 2006

Volume 10 , Number 02

## ADVISING CENTER NEWS

By: Paige Thomas

Department of Horticulture students are really catching on to the values of international experiences while they are Penn State students. Nineteen students are registered to travel to Italy in May after spring semester for a Garden Tour of Italy with Martin McGann and Dan Stearns.

Three Horticulture students that I know about are participating in Study Abroad Programs this semester. Dustin Peffer is in Russia with the College of Ag Sciences International Agriculture Program. Johanna Mirenda is studying at The Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand, and Jordane Fairchild is studying at The University of Melbourne in Australia.

Thanks to all of you who contribute to making these experiences available to our students and encourage them to participate in these terrific programs.

## Hort Club Flower Sales



The Hort Club will be holding flower sales in the basement of the HUB, next to the bookstore entrance, on the following days:

- Monday, February 12 from 10-5 PM
- Tuesday, February 13 from 10-5 PM
- Wednesday, February 14 from 10-5 PM

## Department Awards Ceremony

Please mark your calendar for Thursday, February 15, 2007 for the yearly Department of Horticulture Award Ceremony. This year the ceremony will be held in room 108 Tyson Building at 2:30 p.m.

Come celebrate with your fellow employees of the department for their years of service to the College of Agricultural Sciences.

Food and drinks will be served.

## February

### Calendar of Events

**Feb. 1-3**

-PASA Conference

**Feb. 2**

-Groundhog Day

**Feb. 6-8**

-2007 PLNA Conference

**Feb. 14**

-Valentine's Day

**Feb. 14-15**

-Christmas Tree Short Course

**Feb. 15**

- Department Awards Ceremony, 108 Tyson at 2:30 pm

**Feb. 19**

-Presidents' Day

**Feb. 19 - Mar. 4**

-Final Exam Conflict- Filing Period

**Feb. 26**

-Submit doctoral thesis for format review

**Feb. 28**

-Submit master's for format review

**Happy Birthday!**

Richard Marini Feb. 11

Phanchita Vejchasarn Feb. 11

Jean-Philippe Marelli Feb. 15



## Department Match



Match the fact with the correct department member. Facts may apply to more than one department member listed (and possibly others not listed). Some information can be found in the “Colleagues and Cohorts” feature in this issue, and the correct answers appear below. Permission to use facts and names is usually obtained prior to publication.

A. Former private investigator	Dave Eissenstat
B. His alma mater is now a women’s prison...	Jay Holcomb
C. Master in Karate	Jori Sharda
D. Spent a summer herding 1500 sheep!	Jonathan Lynch
E. Accomplished in piano and choir	Rich Arteca
F. Even met his wife while working at a greenhouse	Mike Orzolek
G. Speaks fluent Japanese	



## Graduate Colloquium

### Horticulture 590

Room. 111 Tyson

4:00 - 5:00 PM

Feb. 5- No Seminar

Feb. 12- **John Carlson**, School of Forest Resources, Penn State University, “Genomics for Tree Improvement”

Feb. 22- No Seminar

Feb. 26- **Dr. Heng Zhu**, Department of Pharmacology, John Hopkins University, “Application and Improvement of the Protein Chip Technology” joint seminar between Plant Pathology and Plant Biology Programs, LOCATION: 112 Buckhout Laboratory at 3:30

## February Conferences

Feb. 1-3, 16th Annual Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA) Conference at the Penn Stater. For more information visit: <http://www.pasafarming.org/conferences/confinfo.htm>

Feb. 6-8, Pennsylvania Landscape and Nursery Conference (PLNA) at the Penn Stater. For more information visit: <http://www.plna.com>

Feb. 14-15, Christmas Tree Management Short Course at the Ramada Inn and Conference Center. For more information visit: <http://horticulture.psu.edu>

Answers: A – Jonathan Lynch; B – Mike Orzolek; C – Rich Arteca; D – Dave Eissenstat; E – Jori Sharda; F – Jay Holcomb; G – Jori Sharda

## Colleagues and Cohorts



Jori Sharda  
IBIOS  
Ph.D. Candidate  
103 Headhouse #1

Greet Jori Sharda with “Konnichi wa, ogenki desuka?” ( the Japanese equivalent of hi, how are you?) and she will respond in perfect Japanese! How does a blue eyed, blonde born in Newark, New Jersey develop such language

skills? Jori’s life has been an interesting journey that has taken her across continents and brought her for now to Penn State as a graduate student working on her doctorate in Roger Koide’s lab.

At the age of seven, Jori’s world dramatically changed when her father, a minister, decided to go to Japan to be a missionary. He attended language school for two years in Tokyo, and later transferred to northeastern Japan, the Tohoku region. There Jori and her siblings, an older sister and a younger brother and sister, attended public school where of course, everything was taught in the native language of Japanese. This experience has given Jori a profound appreciation for the many international graduate students who come to Penn State without English as their first language.

Although Jori returned to the States to attend Calvin College in Michigan and earned a BS in biology, spending eleven years of your childhood in another country, undoubtedly left many lasting impressions. “People in Japan have a keen interest in other cultures, which I don’t see here to the same degree”, Jori observed. Also, there appears to be a more disciplined approach to education in Japan. “We were expected to work hard at our studies, sports, music lessons, etc., even if it wasn’t always fun. A lot of what is taught to the kids in the U.S. now (I work with a youth group so I hear little tidbits of this) is that you should do something if you enjoy it, or if you’re good at it. To a certain extent, I definitely agree that you will be the happiest if you are doing a job that you enjoy. However, you will also be more fulfilled if you have daily challenges that push you to wrestle with a problem and grow because of that. Not all classes are going to be entertaining, and just because you didn’t get



E. Jay Holcomb  
Professor of Floriculture  
317 Tyson Building  
65% teaching, 25% research appointment  
30 years with the department  
Born and raised in Simsbury, CT

Agriculture in general, and horticulture in particular, have played a large role in Jay’s life. Jay grew up on farm, where his interest in plants was piqued. However, the chores such as getting the hay in on hot humid days, and the outdoor work on the cold days, convinced Jay that working with plants in a more controlled environment would be preferable. Jay joined the department as a faculty member in 1977, though he had been at PSU previously, earning both an M.S. and a Ph.D. in Horticulture under John White during 1966-1972. He earned a B.S. in Horticulture from the University of Connecticut, and prior to that, an Associate’s degree in Horticulture from the Ambler Campus of Temple University.

After earning his B.S. degree, Jay worked at two private horticultural companies where he managed Rieger begonia production, and then new products. When asked what events made a large impression on him, Jay replied that the time working in industry played a important role, affecting how he looks at horticulture, and his teaching philosophy. He wants students to be well-prepared for their future careers, having a true understanding of plants so they can make adjustments in management practices to meet real-world deadlines. “It doesn’t really help if the poinsettias are ready 2 or 3 days *after* Christmas!”

Courses Jay teaches are Hort 352, Flower Arranging; Hort 450, Greenhouse Management; and Hort 453, Flower Crop Production and Management. His research is primarily on the effects of growth regulators and growing media on greenhouse crops. In addition he is working on propa-

an “A” in a class, it doesn’t mean that you didn’t learn something from it. It is humbling for me to see so many international students here at Penn State who are getting their degrees in English, which is, in many cases, their second or third language. I am sure that there are days that are not ‘fun’, but for them, it is not a matter of being entertained during a class or discovering what comes the easiest to you—for many that I have talked to, they are getting a degree so that they can get a job here and provide for their families. Many of them want to put their kids through school here, and are willing to work hard to make that happen. We Americans tend to forget that we live a luxurious life here, and that so many around the world would give anything to be given a chance. That is humbling to me.”

After coming to Penn State in 2003, Jori married college sweetheart Dan Sharda, also a graduate student at Penn State in Veterinary Science.

So for now Happy Valley is home. While she is now relatively close to all of the relatives she missed while in Japan, her parents remain there. Thankfully with modern technology she can email her Dad and keep him abreast of her research efforts, “Investigating the role of root anatomy in phosphorus-mediated regulation of mycorrhizal colonization.” In addition to her research Jori loves music, and plays the piano and directs the high school choir at her church. “That’s been an interesting and challenging ‘extracurricular’ activity that I have had while in grad school. I like reading, and I have been trying to keep up on learning Chinese (a slow, humbling process). I also like sports—volleyball, softball, Frisbee, among others.”

Future plans? “ We have definitely thought about possibly moving to China. Dan and I met in China, during an off-campus semester in our senior years at Calvin. It was a great experience, and we are hoping to return there as scientists/researchers/professors, etc. We’ll see. I’ve had great experiences and met interesting people in all the places I have lived up to now. As long as you’re interested in the local culture and willing to learn a new way of life, anywhere in the world can become ‘home.’ As the Japanese say, ‘Sumeba miyako’ (Wherever you live, you can come to love it.)”

gation of orchids from seed. Jay briefly worked in administration, serving as Interim Department Head during 1995 and 1996.

Asked what his favorite hobby is, Jay replied “I’m a horticulturalist. I garden!” Other favorite places to spend time are in Chincoteague, and on Assateague Island, where he and his wife Brenda enjoy taking long walks on the quiet trails during the off-season.

So, given Jay’s consistent career in horticulture, where did he meet Brenda? Yep, at a greenhouse operation where Jay worked after earning his Associate degree, and Brenda was doing the book-keeping. They have two grown children, Todd and Holly, who lives in Pennsylvania and Maryland, respectively.