PLANT SCIENCE & LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

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PSLA Welcomes New Faculty
Dr. Sohyun Park (left) and Dr. Sungmin Lee (right) joined the Landscape Architecture faculty in August. Dr. Lee’s research focuses on community design to promote community health and safety. Dr. Park conducts research on planning and design features that improve environmental sustainability.

PSLA Honors Recent Retiree
Landscape Architecture Professor Mark Westa retired in August 2018. Mark recently served as program coordinator and guided the program in re-accreditation in 2018. Mark was one of the founding members of our nationally accredited, professional degree program in Landscape Architecture. His work with students and his connections to the professional community will be missed.

In Memorial
Associate Extension Educator Joan Allen passed away suddenly in August. Joan was an enthusiastic contributor to many outreach extension, teaching and community service activities. Joan managed the Plant Diagnostic Clinic and served on a number of extension program committees including the Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey Committee, the Integrated Pest Management team, the Sustainable Living Team, and the GMO working group.

IPM program received well-deserved accolades.
It was a banner year for the Integrated Pest Management team. Their dedication and hard work with CT stakeholders earned the team the 12th annual Provost Award for Excellence in Public Engagement and an Official Citation from the State of Connecticut General Assembly.
New Initiatives, Outstanding Achievements

New Curriculum
The department recently launched its new Sustainable Plant and Soil Systems (SPSS) curriculum. The new SPSS major has concentrations in Environmental Horticulture, Sustainable Agriculture, and Turfgrass Science. The major was designed to address increased interest in food production and environmentally sustainable management practices while also supporting our traditional programs in Ornamental Horticulture, and Turfgrass and Soil Science.

Student Exchange with Nanjing Agricultural University
Following a visit to several Chinese universities in 2014, the department entered into a 3+2 exchange agreement with Nanjing Agricultural University. The first class of NAU students have now completed both their undergraduate studies, and this past year, their MS degrees.

Success Breeds Success! Professor Yi Li developed an innovative method that employs molecular genetic techniques to improve crops that are Non-GMO. His article in The Conversation “These CRISPR-modified crops don’t count as GMOs” summarizes this technology & the Editors-in-Chief of the Springer-Nature’s journals identified Dr. Li’s research article on “screening of CRISPR/Cas9-mediated non-transgenic mutant plants” as research that “could help change the world”! Dr. Li is currently working on non-invasive, seedless Burning Bush (euonymus), dwarf-perennial ryegrass that is low maintenance and more stress tolerant, and he is using his new technology to combat the devastating citrus-greening disease. This past year, Dr. Li was elected a Fellow of the American Society of Horticultural Science "in recognition of his outstanding contributions to science, the profession, & the industry of horticulture."

New Plant Patents and Well Deserved Honors. Professor Mark Brand has patented and introduced an impressive list of new woody ornamental and edible crop species, and along the way, has received well-deserved recognition for his work. Much of his breeding work has focused on Black Chokeberry (or Aronia) for both juice and landscape use, seedless Barberry to combat invasiveness, and Buddleia for landscape use. This past year he received five new plant patents, filed five new patent applications, and licensed two plant lines to commercial vendors. His dwarf shrub introduction ‘Low Scape Mound Aronia’ was named the 2019 Landscape Shrub of the Year. This past year Dr. Brand was named to the National Academy of Inventors, a Fellow of the Eastern Region of the International Plant Propagator’s Society, and received both the Mehlquist and the Mehrhoff Awards.

New Opportunity in Horticulture - Cannabis! PSLA introduced a new course on the Horticulture of Cannabis for spring 2019. The early enrollment of over 400 students reflects the increased interest in this medicinal crop, and the demands of a developing commercial industry. The course parallels a new research initiative on cannabidiol or CBD production in hemp. CBD is a non-psychoactive chemical compound used to treat a number of ailments from anxiety to pain to various seizure disorders.
Student & Alumni Activities

**Landscape Architecture Student Wins National Award.** PhD student Tao Wu and graduate advisor Professor Kristin Schwab won the CELA (Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture) Fellow Award of Excellence for their research presentation “Prospect: Beyond Survival | Refugee Resilience Planning for Europe & Beyond”. The national CELA Conference was held at Virginia Tech University in March. Tao comes from Nanjing Agricultural University in China.

**Alumnus Finds Success in New York City.** Former graduate Stephanie Lucas (2010 double major in horticulture and turfgrass science) is the deputy director for Madison Square Park in Manhattan. She manages 14 employees and a six-acre park.

**Alumnus Jacob Collette Thriving at Disney.** Five years ago Jacob Collette took an internship at Disney’s EPCOT Center. Today he is in charge of landscape maintenance at the park where he manages activities related to events such as the Festival of the Arts, The Flower and Garden Festival, The Food and Wine Festival, and the Festival of the Holidays. Maintenance for such events is a daily chore so that the grounds look perfect when the park opens despite regular damage from both guests and cast members. Jacob supervises a crew of 25-30 people along with a group of interns in the summer.

PSLA graduates, please

**“Tell us about your success”**

Let your former classmates know what you are up to in our next newsletter. Send a picture and a short post to PSLA@UConn.edu

**PSLA Students Thrive Abroad**

Students participated in a number of exciting travel abroad opportunities including a semester in Florence Italy with the International Studies Institute, and a 30 day, 12 city, 8 country excursion in our new ‘European Form and Design’ class offered by the Landscape Architecture program. Study abroad opportunities in Europe and Cuba are planned for spring 2019.