Turfgrass Faculty Member: Joseph “Joey” Young

Dr. Joseph Young, as assistant professor in turfgrass science, started his position in the Department of Plant and Soil Science on January 1, 2013. Dr. Young has experience in golf course and sports turf management and brings that experience to his teaching and research. Originally from Birmingham, Alabama, Young received a bachelor of science in agronomy with an emphasis on golf course and turf management, and a master of science in plant pathology from Mississippi State University. He completed his doctorate degree in turfgrass science from the University of Arkansas. Dr. Young has served in many capacities at the University of Arkansas, Mississippi State University, and through the United States Golf Association in Charlotte, North Carolina. He is currently a member of Crop Science Society of America, Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, and the American Phytopathological Society. Prior to coming to Texas Tech, Dr. Young received several awards, including: University of Arkansas Department of Horticulture outstanding PhD Graduate Student, First place in the Crop Science Society of America poster competition, Golf Course Superintendents Association of America Watson Fellowship Award, and Mississippi State College of Agriculture and Life Science Graduate Student Research Award. Since January, Dr. Young has jump-started the Texas Tech Turf Club and will serve as organization advisor.

We are excited to have Dr. Young in our department and look forward to his future as a Plant and Soil Science faculty member.
Chat with the Chair

June 2013 reminds me of some lyrics from Bob Dylan songs—“A hard rain is gonna fall” and “Blowin’ in the wind.” The night of June 5th brought blowing winds and hard rain in the form of hail. The damages done to PSS facilities were 400 panes of glass broken or blown out of the greenhouse, essentially all of the crops at the Quaker farm destroyed and an oak tree adjacent to the Agricultural Plant Science building on the ground. These events did not dampen (pun intended) our spirits for the year. At least that week we received some precipitation, which has been sorely lacking for the past two years. We are still too dry, but we have moisture to get the replanted crops up. Additionally, the Texas Tech budget seems to be slightly increased which is pleasant economic news for the department. While I am mentioning positive happenings, this issue of the PSS newsletter highlights Dr. Joey Young, a turfgrass faculty member since January. July will bring with it the arrival of Dr. Venugopal Mendu, our targeted hire in cell wall biology. September will bring the addition of two faculty members—Dr. Terry McLendon and David Weindorf. Terry is a targeted hire in plant ecohydrology/ecological modeling and brings years of experience in watershed scale modeling. David comes from Louisiana State University where he was an Associate Professor of Pedology and will assume the B. L. Allen Endowed Chair in Pedology. Future newsletters will have more to say about these three new PSS faculty members. With the addition of these three faculty members, PSS will have replaced the four faculty members who left after Spring semester 2011 and added two new targeted hire positions. As Texas Tech grows in enrollment and research prowess, PSS must also continue to grow. “Well, I wake in the morning; Fold my hands and pray for rain...”

Faculty News

The Texas Legislature has approved $3.6 million in continued funding of the Texas Alliance for Water Conservation for 2014-2019. The TAWC is administered in the Plant and Soil Science Department by Dr. Chuck West. The project started in 2004 by Dr. Vivien Allen (professor emerita) to demonstrate methods of improving efficiency of irrigation water use in the Southern High Plains and is managed by Mr. Rick Kellison. Collaborators include Dr. Stephan Maas of the Plant and Soil Science Department, other faculty in Departments of Agricultural and Applied Economics, Agricultural Education and Communications, and Animal and Food Sciences, and a 9-member board of producers.

The PSS department will be welcoming in three new faculty members this fall: Dr. Venugopal Mendu, cell wall biology; Dr. Terry McLendon for ecohydrology and ecological modeling; and Dr. David Weindorf, B.L. Allen Endowed Chair in Pedology.

Dr. Cynthia McKenney has been awarded the Honorary Lifetime Award from the Texas Nursery and Landscape Association (TNLA).

Dr. Scott Longing is conducting a project: Surveys and habitat assessments of endemic insects at the Monahans dune system. This project is funded by Texas Parks and Wildlife and will last through August.

Dr. Chuck West published the following paper:

The renovation of the PSS Work Room has been completed! The new work room is located in the Plant Science building room 261.

Growing and taste-testing unusual vegetables has become a new part of the Department’s horticulture garden. The garden is a collaboration between TTU Horticulture garden and greenhouse, TTU horticulture society and TTU students in Principles of Horticulture class. TTU students get to start the vegetable seeds and learn techniques in preparing and planting a garden. TTU horticulture society has been instrumental in planning, preparing, installing and maintaining the garden through the summer. Lasagna garden technique along with top hay mulch was used for layering organic matter on the topsoil, crucial for success in betting West Texas drought and heat. A primary goal of the garden is to donate most of the produce to the South Plains Food Bank. The group hopes to hold tasting days to check the quality of the varieties.

The garden is open to the public as a demonstration of what vegetable varieties grows well and what does not in Lubbock.

Environmental controller upgrades are nearing completion in the research greenhouse bays. These upgrades, provided by the University, will integrate heaters, vents and evaporative cooling pad operations, reducing overall energy consumption. During July, roof vents in the teaching greenhouses were upgraded from manual cranks to motorized, automatic operation and then tied in to the environmental control system.

The Texas International Cotton School will take place in Lubbock August 5-16, 2013. Christi Chadwell is the school coordinator, with the school being held at the PSS Fiber and Biopolymer Research Institute. Visit www.texasintlcottonschool.com for more information on the school.

Storms raged through the South Plains in early June, leaving a line of destruction in their wake. Ninety mile per hour winds and golf ball size hail wreaked havoc on the Texas Tech University campus. The Horticultural Greenhouse and Gardens complex and the Quaker Research Farm were hit particularly hard, resulting in 400 broken windows and massive damages to the gardens. Trees were snapped in half, annual trial plants were decimated and established perennials looked as if they had been shredded. A number of research and teaching plants inside the greenhouse were also destroyed as the hail broke through the windows and severed the plants nearby. Virtually all crops at the Quaker Farm were damaged with total replanting needed. Fortunately, the farm did not experience structural or equipment damage. Widespread damage was seen across the city, as well, including several trees on campus.
In May 2013, the department had more than 20 students graduate. They include graduate students: Caleb Albers, Nacer Aounallah, Justin Cave, Ratan Chopra, Jacob Gosschalk, Shanshan Li, Holli Myers, Fulvio Simao; and undergraduate students: Roger Berry, Daniel Cunningham, Jerred Dodds, Kevin Evenson, Nathan Foster, Ryan Gregory, Amy Griggs, Julia Hitch, Trevor Johnson, Parker Noel, Michael Orsak, Hardy Parsons, Jeffrey Shelton, Amy Volz, Travis Witt, and Nathan Yandell.

Graduate student, Chenhui Li, successfully defended her thesis and began a Ph.D. program under Dr. Moore-Kucera in summer 2013. Other students that have successfully defended a thesis/dissertation in the last few months are: J.D. Booker, Corey Thompson, Zhanxia Yang, Caren Ayala, Becky Grubbs, Jessica Poole, and Vicky Ma.

The Texas Tech soils judging team travelled to Platteville, Wisconsin to compete in the National Collegiate Soils Contest, hosted by the University of Wisconsin – Platteville. The contest was held April 20-27th, with the students representing the TTU soils team being Parker Noel, a senior from Canyon; David Brockman, a freshman from Newcastle; Trent Smith, a freshman from Waco; and Trey Roach, a freshman from Keller. Travis Conley, a doctoral student from Hooker, OK, is the team’s advisor and coach. The team qualified for the National Collegiate Soils Contest by placing third in the regional contest hosted by Oklahoma State University last fall.

Staff News

Christi Chadwell was recently elected to serve on the Texas Tech Staff Senate. Her term will be for the next two years, and she will represent all staff members, but specifically the College of Agriculture and the Department of Plant and Soil Science.

Kayla Lizama recently accepted a new role in a different office on campus. Kayla will be working with the Mentor Tech program. We are excited for her new start and wish her all the best! In the meantime, Diann Merriman will cover all academic advising, for on-campus and distance students.

We have finally finished the office moves in the PSS main office. Teresa Davis has moved her office to the other end of the hallway, and is now located in the Plant Science building room 253.

Student News

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