Plant and Soil Science Department adds plant physiologist, Venugopal Mendu

Dr. Venugopal Mendu, an assistant professor who specializes in plant physiology and biochemistry, joined the Department on July 1, 2013.

Dr. Mendu is particularly interested in continuing his research efforts on plant cell wall biology. One of his goals is to identify and characterize the genes involved in the plant cell wall biosynthesis using model plant Arabidopsis and apply for the cotton fiber improvement.

Prior to joining the Texas Tech faculty, Dr. Mendu served as a postdoctoral fellow at the Institute of Biology, École normale supérieure (IBENS) in Paris, and at the University of Kentucky’s departments of Horticulture and Plant Pathology. He also worked as a graduate research assistant with the University of Kentucky’s Department of Plant and Soil Sciences, as well as a research associate in the Center for Plant Molecular Biology at Osmania University -India.

Dr. Mendu received his bachelor’s degree in agriculture and master’s degree in genetics and plant breeding from ANGR Agricultural University-India. His doctorate in plant physiology/biochemistry/molcular biology is from the University of Kentucky. His awards include the Jeffery Fellowship at the University of Kentucky (2006); Kentucky Graduate Scholarship (2003-2008); and Junior Research Fellow, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research-University Grants Commission National Eligibility Test-India (1999).

Congratulations to the following PSS Students that graduated in December 2013:

Graduate students: Maheshika Herath, Sumedha Liyanage, Roji Manandhar, Rajeev Rajbhandari, and Curtis Schaefer

Undergraduate students: Christopher Baker, Laney Bateman, Trevor Deines, Josh Goode, Michelle McMillan, Tyler Spencer, Eric Valles, Anna Vogler, Ramzi White, and Holly Wilson
Chat with the Chair

William Butler Yeats said “Education is not filling a pail, but lighting of a fire.” As I conduct my exit interviews with graduating PSS students, I see the meaning of his statement. Some students burn as brightly as a sparkler on the Fourth of July. These students are as good as any in the world. Other students flame as a bright candle. These are the ones that will bring honor to the Plant and Soil Science Department and Texas Tech University. Still other students show the glow of a candle wick that is red hot, ready to burst into full flame. A few students are sitting in hot water (pun intended) and have yet to catch fire. As faculty members our job is to educate our students who will become the next generation of Plant and Soil Science leaders. Our “sparkler” students learn from our guidance, but would thrive in most environments. The remainder of our students receive their educational glow of fire from faculty. I ask the exiting students “Who was your best PSS teacher?” Just like the variable flames of the students, I received variable names of best PSS teachers. Gratefully, there are none of Yeat’s “Pail fillers” with all PSS faculty members having been mentioned as “best” teachers. As PSS and Texas Tech move to a Tier-One status university, we must keep in mind that a university exists to educate our students. I am happy to report that the PSS faculty are committed to lighting the fire of our students. It is only by having an educated agricultural workforce that we can feed, clothe and provide aesthetic resources for an ever expanding world-wide population. The PSS faculty, staff and students are working to solve these world-wide issues.

PSS New Building News

The new Plant and Soil Science wing is now at the 70% design and development stage. We anticipate a formal ground breaking in late March with construction beginning in earnest in May. If you would like to contribute to constructing the new Plant and Soil Science wing, please make your checks payable to the Texas Tech University Foundation with the designation of the “Plant Science Wing.” For additional information, please contact Ms. Jane Piercy, Development Officer, TTU Institutional Advancement Office, MS 2123, Lubbock, Texas 79409-2123. Please support us as we grow the department. To read the official TTU Press Release, visit this site: http://www.depts.ttu.edu/agriculturalsciences/news/?p=3563.

New PSS Degree Program

January 2014 marked the launch of a new bachelor of science program in the department. The former degrees of BS in horticulture and turfgrass science and BS in environmental crop and soil science have been merged to reflect a bachelor of science in plant and soil science with four specialization areas. To read more on this program, visit www.pssc.ttu.edu.
The Texas Alliance for Water Conservation (TAWC) received the 2013 Integrated Water Resources Management Project Award from the American Water Resources Association at their recent annual conference in Portland, OR. Plant and Soil Department personnel involved in TAWC include Drs. Chuck West and Stephan Maas, and research associates Rick Kellison and Phil Brown.

Dr. David Weindorf will be hosting several scholars in this semester. They include: Dr. Abdalsamad Abdalsatar Ali Aldabaa, from the Desert Research Center in Cairo, Egypt, working with arid soil morphology and classification; Dr. Somsubhra Chakraborty, from Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University in Kolkata, India, working with reflectance spectrometer; and Dr. Dandan Wang, from Nanjing University of Information Science and Technology, in Nanjing, China, working with soil properties and remote sensing applications.

Dr. Weindorf has a new graduate student in his area, Mrs. Aakriti Sharma from Katmandu Nepal, working on her master of science degree.

The Texas Tech University Soils Judging Team competed in the Region IV Soils Judging Contest hosted by the University of Arkansas. In team judging, Texas Tech took first place. Individually, David Brockman placed 6th and Trey Roach placed 8th. Team members Trent Smith and Reed Johnston were in the top 20. Overall, the Texas Tech team placed 3rd and qualified to advance to nationals in the spring. The team was coached by Dr. David C. Weindorf with doctoral student Travis Conley assisting.

Alexandre Rocateli won 3rd place at the annual ASA-CSA-SSSA Meetings in Tampa, FL in November in a graduate student Barnes Paper Competition, forage and grasslands section. The title of the paper was “Simulating season trends in switchgrass biomass using Almanac.” Alex is a doctoral student advised by Dr. Chuck West.

Dr. Lisa Fultz (former PSS Ph.D. student and current post-doc working in the Moore-Kucera lab) recently accepted an Assistant Professor of Soil Microbiology of Cropping Systems position at the School of Plant, Environmental and Soil Sciences at Louisiana State University. Dr. Fultz will begin her new position in April 2014.

Dr. Marko Davinic (former PSS Ph.D. student in the Moore-Kucera lab) was recently highlighted in the SSSA News Story “Taking the Industry Path,” featured on November 21, 2013. Dr. Davinic is the R&D coordinator of Western Ag Innovations Inc and the General Manager of Western Ag Professional Agronomy, ND.

Beltwide Presentations:

Travis Witt, Loren Davis, Dr. Auld, and Dr. Ritchie presented a poster: “Identification of commercial cultivars for the high plains with drought tolerance or improved response to water deficits.”

Bablu Sharma gave an oral presentation: “Ground Cover Fraction from Green and Red Channels of Digital Camera.”

Cameron Oliver presented a paper: “Comparison of the yield components under three water regimes.”

Misha Manuchehri won first place in the PhD poster contest with her poster titles: “Non-2,4-D tolerant cotton response to drift and tank contamination.”
Dr. Moore-Kucera had the following publications:


Dr. Moore-Kucera had the following presentations:


Dr. Hequet had the following publications:

- This is an invited paper published in the International Cotton Advisory Council Recorder. The paper is available internationally and was translated into several languages. Information about the ICAC is available here, [https://www.icac.org/about/overview](https://www.icac.org/about/overview)


- This is an invited paper about the future of cotton fiber presented by Dr. Hequet in Brazil.


Dr. Hequet had the following presentations:

