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**From the Center Director**

**T**he onset of spring prompts us to think of new beginnings, and along those lines I'm happy and proud to be the new Director of the WFREC. The faculty and staff have made me welcome, and I'm impressed with the competence and dedication of the WFREC personnel. Suffice it to say that I am grateful to have joined an organization that has such wonderful people to work with.



During my first two months here, I met individually with all WFREC faculty and staff, and have been impressed with the value and scope of our current programs. Our teaching programs in natural resources and plant science continue to grow, and our student body excels with several students making the Dean's list last semester. Our research programs in forestry, wildlife, environmental horticulture, turf, and weed science are making real contributions to science that can be applied to the well being of people, agriculture, and ecosystems in the Florida Panhandle. Our extension programs in turf and weed science continue to have local, regional, and national impact. These and other extension efforts in the small farms arena are further multiplied via the great relationship the WFREC personnel have with extension faculty in Santa Rosa and surrounding counties. Moreover, the revamped WFREC crop variety testing program is producing results that farmers and other agricultural professionals are using to make production decisions across the Panhandle. The upshot is that we have great things going on at the WFREC.

We also have new WFREC efforts that are looking into the possibilities of alternative crops for our region. Recently, we held a pomegranate production seminar at the Jay Research Facility led by Dr. Bill Castle from the Citrus REC. The response was overwhelming, and we had an overflow crowd of attendees. We are also installing a pomegranate variety test orchard at Jay. Similarly, we are holding an olive production seminar on 4 April, as olive production may be a viable alternative for our farmers. An olive variety test orchard will be established at Jay as well. Heirloom corn varieties will be evaluated at Jay, and we purchased a stone burr mill to grind corn into grits, meal, and flour. Milling characteristics of the various heirloom varieties will be evaluated and compared. These new efforts expand the scope of good things we are doing at the WFREC.

Another important WFREC news item is that we are currently searching for an assistant professor of cropping systems. This new hire will fill a vital gap in research and extension for Panhandle producers. I look forward to 1 May when the search and screen committee begins evaluating applicants for this position.

I would be remiss if I failed to mention the help and guidance that Dr. Barry Brecke, interim Director for the past couple of years, has provided me since I arrived. His vast knowledge and love for the WFREC is evident in everything he does, and he has been a tremendous help in getting me off to a good start. I am sincerely appreciative for his help. He will now concentrate on running our crop variety testing program and work on weed control in ornamental plantings. His presence is valued, and I hope that he stays on the WFREC team for a long time to come.

On a personal note, I'm looking forward to my family joining me in late May after the school year ends in Auburn. We are in the process of buying a house on Blackwater Bay, south of Bagdad. We are outdoor folks and look forward to the recreational activities available in the area.

Finally, many have asked what my team allegiance is now that I'm with UF. I root for the paycheck: **Go Gators!**



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## New Research Equipment

Dr. Bryan Unruh and Dr. Ramon Leon have both won grant funding for new research equipment. The new equipment being purchased includes a GVF Rootwasher Hydro-neumatic Elutriation System, a WinRhizo™ washed root scanning system, a BartzTechnology Corporation High Magnification Minirhizotron camera system, a Giddings Machine Company soil probe, AccuSpin Micro 17/17R centrifuge, Gel Doc EZ Criterion Stain Free imager, Power Pac Universal, C1000 Touch Thermal Cycler, and Evolution 200 Series Spectrophotometer.

The soil and root analysis equipment purchased by Dr. Unruh will be beneficial in conducting research across all the fields of study at WFREC and having more specialized research tools may entice some graduate students to our area for study.

Dr. Leon's equipment purchases will allow WFREC to conduct more detailed genetic studies to understand how weeds adapt to weed control tools, and will help us identify and characterize crop varieties that have high tolerance to herbicides and are more competitive against weeds.



Photo: GVF Rootwasher Hydroneumatic Elutriation System

## Employee Happenings

There have been a lot of employee comings and goings this past quarter. As well as the following changes, **Dr. Ken Oser** and **Andrew Williams** were hired as adjunct professors for this current Spring Semester. Dr. Oser is teaching Mensuration and Andrew is teaching Intro to Soils Lab.

On January 31<sup>st</sup> **Paula Smith** joined Dr. Miller's team as Sr. Lab Technician.

On February 1<sup>st</sup> **Dr. Wes Wood** joined WFREC as Center Director.

On February 5<sup>th</sup> **Rocio Van der Laat** joined Dr. Ramon Leon's team to assist with reporting and statistical analysis.

On February 14<sup>th</sup> **Justin Hudson** received a promotion to Maintenance Mechanic within the farm department. A new Agricultural Assistant will be joining us in a few weeks to take Justin's old position.

On February 28<sup>th</sup> **Connie Spencer** started as our new Academic Program Secretary. Connie transferred from UF in Gainesville, where she worked in the Purchasing Department for several years.

On March 27<sup>th</sup> **Justin White** and **Jesse Goyer** left WFREC to pursue other opportunities. We wish them both luck for the future.

Also, Dr. **Darcy Telenko** a post-doctoral research associate working with Drs. Brecke and Unruh has recently accepted a new position as an Extension Associate – Vegetable Specialist with Cornell Cooperative Extension. She will be joining the Cornell Vegetable Team and provide educational programs and information to vegetable growers in western New York. Darcy says the turfgrass and weed science programs here at WFREC have given her unmeasurable experiences that will help her be successful in her future career. She has enjoyed her time here at the Jay Research Farm and will miss those with whom she has collaborated. Please look her up if you are ever near the Niagara Falls or Buffalo areas.

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## Calendar of Events

Mar 24—May 8 **Advanced registration**

April 4 **Panhandle Olive Production Seminar**, 9am—1pm  
Register at <http://wfrec.ifas.ufl.edu/events/>  
West Florida Research and Education Center  
4253 Experiment Road, Hwy 182, Jay FL 32565

Apr 4-5 **Student Club Plant Sale**, Fri 12pm-5pm, Sat 9am-5pm  
PSC/UF Milton Campus, 5988 Highway 90, Milton FL 32583

April 24 **Tomatoes at Twilight Field Day**, 4pm—6pm  
Register at <http://twilight-tomatoes.eventbrite.com>  
West Florida Research and Education Center  
4253 Experiment Road, Hwy 182, Jay FL 32565

May 2 **Spring Graduation**, 6pm  
UF Milton Campus, Bldg 4900, Room 4902  
5988 Highway 90, Milton FL 32583

May 9 **Regular registration**

May 12 **Summer semester classes start**

May 12-13 **Drop/Add**

May 14 **Degree applications due**

May 23 **Fee payments due**

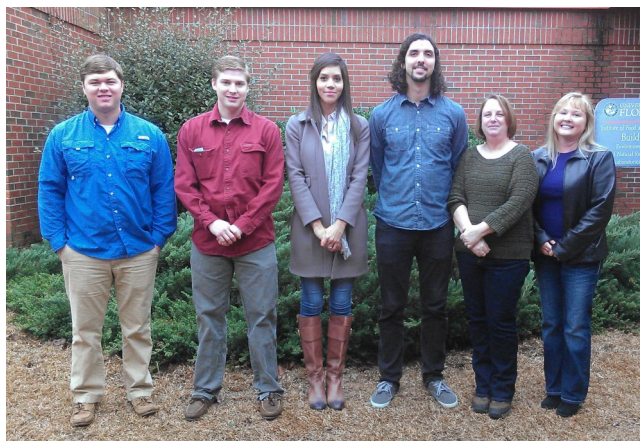
June 13 **Last Day** for students to drop or withdrawal for the semester with a “W”

June 18 **Gulf Coast Turfgrass Expo & Field Day**, 8am—3pm  
Register at <http://www.miltongators.com>  
West Florida Research and Education Center  
4253 Experiment Road, Hwy 182, Jay FL 32565

June 20—Aug 8 **Final Exams**

## Dean's List

The following students made the University of Florida College of Agricultural and Life Sciences Dean's List for Fall 2013 semester: Phillip Garrett, Cody English, Christie Wagner, Alex Steed, Paula Smith and Julie Wood. Students in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences must complete at least 12 credit hours during the semester and have a GPA of no less than 3.70. This is a great accomplishment for these students and WFREC congratulates them!



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## WFREC Variety Testing

The WFREC variety testing program in 2013 proved to be a successful collaborative project between the researchers at the WFREC Jay Research Facility and our county agricultural agents. We are well underway for planning of our 2014 field season. In 2013, we had variety trials and demonstrations in sweet corn, grain corn, early and mid-full season cotton, soybean and peanut. Fungicide programs were also evaluated in peanut for disease control. These projects were in collaboration with UF Extension agents in Escambia, Santa Rosa and Okaloosa counties. The data generated have been used by many county agents and crops specialists in Florida, Alabama, and Georgia during winter field crop programs. The results of our trials can also be found on our website <http://wfrec.ifas.ufl.edu/variety/> or contact Darcy Telenko [deptelenko@ufl.edu](mailto:deptelenko@ufl.edu).

For the 2014 season we have seen a great expansion of varieties and crops that we will be evaluating. Some of the projects for the 2014 season include:

- Winter wheat
- Grain corn
- Sweet corn
- Cotton OVT – early season
- Cotton Ovt – mid-full season
- Soybean
- Sorghum
- Peanut fungicide programs (white mold and leaf spot)
- Cotton fungicide programs (target spot)
- Potato demonstration
- Heirloom corn
- Tomato – high tunnel

The station is also getting ready to plant a pomegranate grove and an olive grove. We see this program providing agronomic data such as yield, maturity, test weight, and other information to assist our local growers in finding the best adapted crop cultivars for use in the Florida panhandle. The research will provide important information for selection of varieties in vegetable and crop production. We are excited about the expansion of this program and if you are interested in any of these crops we hope you will join us at our upcoming field days.

**Spring Small Farms Field Day – April 24**

**Corn Variety Trail – mid June**

**Extension Farm Field Day – August**



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## 26th Annual Forestry Conclave and Lumberjack Festival

**O**n Saturday, March 1st, Pensacola State College, Milton Campus held the 26th Annual Forestry Conclave and Lumberjack Festival. Admission was free to the public and the festivities included bluegrass music, food, nature and wildlife exhibits, firefighting equipment demonstrations, children's activities, and the following forestry competitions: knife throwing, axe throwing, log roll, bow sawing, cross-cut sawing, pulpwood toss, compass and pacing and standing chop.

The UF Milton Student Ambassadors (Alex Steed, Cody English and Le'a Dawes) had a booth for building bird feeders in the children's activity area.



Several UF Students participated in the competitions. Kevin Smith placed 1st in Bow Sawing, Chaz Riley and partner, Alec Riley, placed 1st in Men's Cross-cut while Kevin Smith and partner, Logan Patterson, placed 2nd. Kevin Smith and partner, Anthea Amos, placed 3rd in Jack and Jill Cross-cut. Chaz Riley placed 1st in the Standing Chop, Scott Singletary placed first in Compass and Pacing, which was judged by our own Justin McKeithen. Ken Oser, who is an adjunct professor teaching Mensuration this semester, was a judge for the Pulpwood Toss and Log Roll.

Everyone had a great time and weather was good. We encourage anyone who is interested to come out and participate next year.



**DO YOU BUY OR SELL NON-TIMBER FOREST SPECIALTY PRODUCTS?** Promote your business by getting yourself listed in a Florida online business directory for free!

Give your business a boost and free publicity if you sell or buy any non-timber forest products such as berries and other fruits, honey, medicinal plants such as saw-palmetto berries and St. Johns Wort, pinestraw, Spanish moss, or decorative wood and pieces including pine cones, crooked wood, or any other forest derived non-timber product.

If you would like to be listed in the directory of "Florida Non-Timber Specialty Products Suppliers and Markets", please contact (or direct questions) to :

**DR. AJAY SHARMA**

West Florida Research and Education Center, University of Florida  
5988 Highway 90, Building 4900, Milton, FL 32583  
Email: [ajay.sharma@ufl.edu](mailto:ajay.sharma@ufl.edu)  
Tel: 850-983-7132

**UF/IFAS West Florida Research and Education Center**

**Milton:** 5988 Highway 90, Bldg 4900, Milton FL 32583 **Jay:** 4253 Experiment Road, Jay FL 32565 **Phone:** 850.983.5216

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## Graduate Student Spotlight - Joel Reyes-Cabrera

**J**oel Reyes-Cabrera is a PhD student working Spring and Summer 2014 semesters at the Jay Research Facility for Dr. Ramon Leon. He was born in Leon, Nicaragua. Joel received his BS degree in agricultural engineering from EARTH University in Costa Rica in 2009. In 2008 he had the opportunity to work at UF as an intern under Dr. Michael Dukes, an irrigation specialist, and learn about irrigation automated controllers. Then after finishing his BS degree, he worked as a research assistant under Dr. Johan Perret investigating the benefits of using ethanol byproducts as fertilizer sources in commercial sugarcane plantations.

Joel has been interested in water conservation practices since high school and developed a passion for plant physiology and soil fertility while being at EARTH University. In 2010 he decided to pursue a master's degree and was accepted to the Gator Nation in Spring 2011 to work in Dr. Lincoln Zotarelli's lab in the Horticulture Science Department in Gainesville.

In the Fall of 2013 Joel started his PhD in a collaborative research program between Dr. Ramon Leon and Dr. John Erickson working on sustainable water management combined with biochar effects on soil-plant-atmosphere relationships to develop efficient bioenergy cropping systems.



## Thank you Dr. Brecke



On March 27th, WFREC held a luncheon at the Jay Research Facility to thank Dr. Barry Brecke and his wife, Gayle, for their hard work while Dr. Brecke served as WFREC's Interim Center Director for a year and a half. Dr. Brecke will remain working at WFREC on variety trials and weed control in ornamentals.



## Fresh from Florida Program

Northview High School's FFA (Future Farmers of America) Chapter held its 19th annual Fresh from Florida Program on March 14th. This program is designed for elementary school students to learn more about agriculture. Two of UF Milton's Student Ambassadors, Le'a Dawes and Cody English, contributed to the program with a short presentation on the five food groups.



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## UF Milton Campus Student Club Message

by Kevin Smith, President

**C**ome support the University of Florida Milton students at the **17<sup>th</sup> Annual Emerald Coast Flower & Garden Festival, Friday, April 4<sup>th</sup> 12:00 – 5:00 and Saturday, April 5<sup>th</sup> 9:00 – 5:00, at the Pensacola State College Milton Campus.** Ella Jones, Cody English,



along with other students, faculty and staff have worked diligently to prepare for the sale. We have a variety of impressive and beautiful plants ready to sell including some of Dr. Thetford's stunning begonias.

University of Florida was well represented by UF students who participated and placed in the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Northwest Florida Forestry Conclave and Lumberjack Games this year

held in March. For the bragging rights of the title, 2014 Overall Best Lumberjack, Chaz Riley won second place and I placed fourth. These are chosen from the winners in all the events. The UF student competitors did all this while attending classes, taking labs, writing reports, and studying. Quite a feat!

Milton students met and greeted our new Director, Dr. Wes Wood, at our last club meeting. Dr. Wood is a soil scientist; he encouraged the students to join the national "Students in Agronomy, Soils and Environmental Sciences" (SASES) club that he has been affiliated with for several years. Dr. Wood also told the students that he has an open door policy and is looking forward to working with us. The students were pleased that Dr. Wood took the time to meet us, and offered to help us in our collegiate goals.



Four students will be graduating after this semester: Philip Garrett, Chris Jones, Jacob Hullet and Julie wood; I will walk with them in May and earn my degree at the end of the summer. We will receive our Bachelor's degrees in Natural Resource Conservation. We look forward to the day that we don't have to worry about lab reports, research papers, and grades, at least for a little while. This is a tough program; to earn a degree from the University of Florida is a significant milestone. We appreciate the faculty and staff who have supported us through this worthwhile endeavor.



Photo on left: WIS4443C Wetland Wildlife Ecology class on their area wetlands field trip on March 8<sup>th</sup>. The students were visiting a depression marsh on Eglin Air Force Base in this picture. During this trip they also visited a seepage slope in Black Water River State Forest.



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