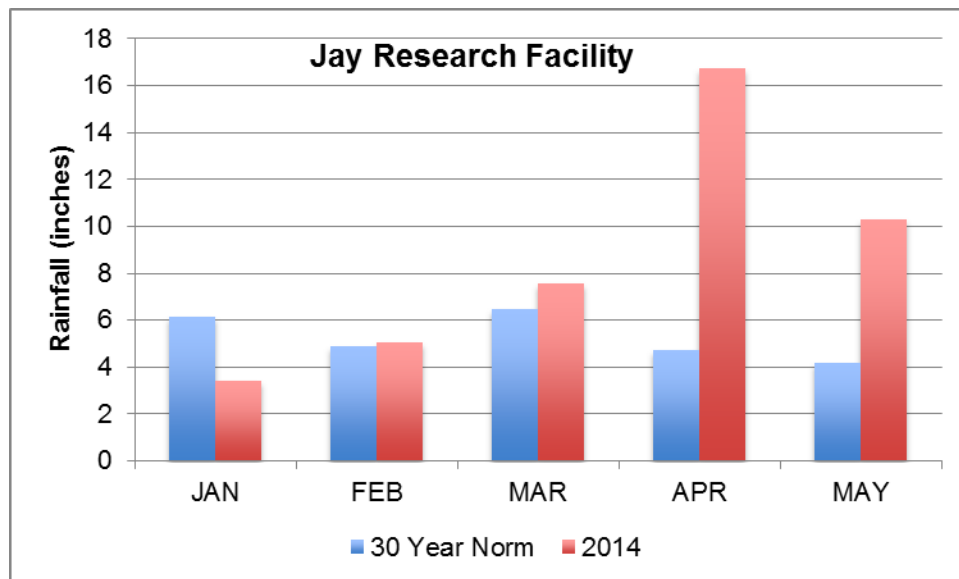
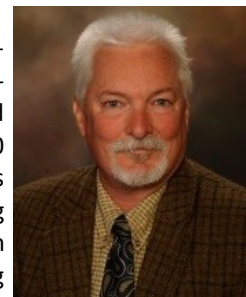


IN THIS ISSUE

From the Director	1
Turfgrass Expo	2
Spring Graduation	2
Dr. Ajay Sharma	3
From Director (cont'd)	4
Student Happenings	4
Calendar of Events	5
Fall Tomato School	5
Student Plant Sale	5
Dr. Ramon Leon	6
WFREC Happenings	7
Summer Internships	8
Landing a Job	8
Mondays in Gardens	9
Doug Hatfield	9

From the Center Director

The second quarter of 2014 has been a busy one at the WFREC. Several positive things have transpired to move our Center forward, while Mother Nature has conspired against us on some fronts. Large amounts of rain delayed crop planting in the Jay area this spring. The graph below depicts monthly 30-year rainfall norms for the Jay Research Facility compared with amounts received in spring of 2014. These data explain why we are still planting cotton and peanuts as of this writing (20 June). What they don't show is even larger amounts of rain received in the Milton and Pensacola areas resulting in flooding that damaged public and private property. During the last two days of April, Jay received 6.1 inches of rainfall, while Milton and Pensacola received 15.0 and 20.4 inches, respectively. Flood damage in the western Florida Panhandle was widespread, and recovery efforts are ongoing. In addition to more than ample rain, lightning strikes damaged irrigation wells and underground water pipes at the Jay Research Facility. We are taking measures to protect these wells and buildings that house expensive equipment against damage from lightning strikes that occur frequently in our area. Let's hope Mother Nature is kinder to us in the future than she has been this spring.



Moving on to better news, the WFREC has made progress towards developing a five-year strategic plan. There are several steps that go into a plan that will be of practical use to our Center, including: 1) formation of an advisory board, 2) input from faculty and staff regarding strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities at/to the WFREC (SWOT analysis), 3) synthesis of the SWOT analysis, 4) writing the plan, and 5) implementation of the plan. We have formed and met with a new Advisory Board made up of business, natural resources, and agricultural leaders in the Florida Panhandle. Biographical sketches for these leaders can be found on our website (<http://wfrec.ifas.ufl.edu>), and they will advise us on programmatic, promotional, and fund-raising efforts. We are grateful for the willingness of these busy individuals to serve in an advisory role. The second step has also been accomplished via an off-campus retreat that was held during 5 and 6 May. There, facilitator led exercises and discussions allowed faculty and staff to provide input for development of the strategic plan. I am currently working with the facilitator to accomplish step three, and will finish steps four and five before the end of 2014. (cont'd on Page 4)



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IN THIS ISSUE

From the Director	1
Turfgrass Expo	2
Spring Graduation	2
Dr. Ajay Sharma	3
From Director (cont'd)	4
Student Happenings	4
Calendar of Events	5
Fall Tomato School	5
Student Plant Sale	5
Dr. Ramon Leon	6
WFREC Happenings	7
Summer Internships	8
Landing a Job	8
Mondays in Gardens	9
Doug Hatfield	9



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Jay Research Facility

20th Annual Gulf Coast Turfgrass Expo

This year marked the 20th anniversary of the Gulf Coast Turfgrass Expo held on June 18th. The weather wasn't as hot as previous years and we had a great turn out. A couple of improvements this year included air conditioning in the events building, and Wi-Fi in the area for attendees and vendors. Three tracks were available: Golf, non-golf (parks and recreation), and master gardeners/lawn enthusiasts.



Presentations included subjects such as how to get the most out of granular herbicide, preventing escapes of late emerging weeds, managing nematodes in turf, drought tolerance of lawn grasses, ornamental grasses for the Gulf Coast and proper tree planting methods. Speakers included researchers, scientists, graduate students, extension agents and business owners. It was quite a varied group of experts who came from all over the state. Breakfast and lunch were provided, along with numerous informational handouts and goodies. After lunch



Dr. Bryan Unruh made a special 20th anniversary presentation giving some highlights of the last 20 years of the expo and the UF turf program here at WFREC. We sure have come a long way! For those of you who weren't able to make it out this year, the Turfgrass Expo is held here every year in June. Watch our website <http://wfrec.ifas.ufl.edu/> for next year's dates.



Spring 2014 Graduation

At the end of Spring 2014 semester six students graduated with Bachelor of Science degrees from UF Milton: **Kevin Smith**, Natural Resource Conservation; **Chris Jones**, Natural Resource Conservation; **Jacob Hullett**, Natural Resource Conservation; **Julie Wood**, cum laude, Natural Resource Conservation with a minor in water and soil science; **Ryan O'Connell**, Environmental Horticulture,



and **Phillip Garrett**, cum laude, Natural Resource Conservation.

On May 2nd UF Milton held a ceremony during which Dr. Wes Wood, Center Director, presented the graduating class to family, friends and fellow students. Congratulations and good luck in your future endeavors!



IN THIS ISSUE

From the Director	1
Turfgrass Expo	2
Spring Graduation	2
Dr. Ajay Sharma	3
From Director (cont'd)	4
Student Happenings	4
Calendar of Events	5
Fall Tomato School	5
Student Plant Sale	5
Dr. Ramon Leon	6
WFREC Happenings	7
Summer Internships	8
Landing a Job	8
Mondays in Gardens	9
Doug Hatfield	9

TAKE A MINUTE with...Dr. Ajay Sharma

Ajay Sharma is a Post-Doctoral Associate in Forest Ecology and Silviculture here at the West Florida Research and Education Center. He is originally from India where he earned his Bachelor and Master degrees in forestry, and worked as a professional forester. In 2008, he joined the University of Florida School of Forest Resources and Conservation in a Ph.D program, following completion of which he joined WFREC in 2012. Ajay's research is focused on understanding how forest ecosystems respond to various management activities such as harvest operations and



understory removal to guide restoration and sustainable management of resources for timber production, bioenergy, carbon sequestration, biodiversity, and wildlife habitat. He is currently working on multiple projects in managed pine forests of northwest Florida. Ajay has also involved himself in teaching Silviculture, Natural Resource Sampling, and Forest Ecology at WFREC.

What brought you to the University of Florida from India?

I was very interested in academia, and always imagined myself teaching at a University and doing research in natural resources. I had developed a lot of interest in research while working at the Indian Institute of Remote Sensing (IIRS) and Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine (IIIM) from 2002 to 2005 where I worked as temporary research fellows. In 2005, I got a permanent position as Range Forest Officer with the Delhi Government in India. However, I soon realized that I wanted to change the job. The Forest Department in Delhi was more like a forest law-enforcement agency whereas I was more interested in ecology and science. The job offered little flexibility and autonomy to pursue my interests which were more focused on research. So, I resigned from that job and decided to go for higher studies and pursue a career in academia which was more aligned to my inner nature. One event led to the other, and I came to Florida. I am glad I came here and feel I am on my way.

You've accepted a position in Missouri. Can you tell me about this new endeavor?

Yes, I have been offered a position of Assistant Professor in Natural Resource Management with the Lincoln University of Missouri. I have accepted the offer and will join beginning of August. It's a 50/50 research and teaching position which is what I ideally wanted. I am very excited about it.

What will you take away from your time here at WFREC?

WFREC has groomed me what I am today. Honestly, I believe that I received the offer from Lincoln University because of the valuable experience in teaching and research that I gained here at WFREC. My mentor Dr. Kimberly Bohn fully supported me and provided me with abundant opportunities. The staff and faculty at WFREC taught me collegiality, and how to be a good colleague and a nice person. One of the most fulfilling and satisfying experience has been my interactions with the students here. I enjoyed every moment I spent with them and they inspire me.

What advice do you have for students wanting to work in forestry or silviculture?

I congratulate them in choosing forestry as a career. I believe that forestry as a profession can solve many of the problems that the world faces today such as climate change, poverty, food insecurity, and many environmental problems. It is important that students decide at an early time how they would like to contribute and make a career in forestry. Some may be more interested in consulting, other might want to join state or federal agencies while some other might go for academic jobs. During the course of their study, the students should also make efforts to gain some additional experience relevant to their career goals. Also, forestry is going to gain increasing importance in coming years and decades with the fast emerging biomass and carbon markets. Students should be prepared to tap the opportunities provided these markets as well as forestry in general.



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IN THIS ISSUE

From the Director	1
Turfgrass Expo	2
Spring Graduation	2
D. Ajay Sharma	3
From Director (cont'd)	4
Student Happenings	4
Calendar of Events	5
Fall Tomato School	5
Student Plant Sale	5
Dr. Ramon Leon	6
WFREC Happenings	7
Summer Internships	8
Landing a Job	8
Mondays in Gardens	9
Doug Hatfield	9

(Center Director, cont'd from page 1)

Three successful events were held at the WFREC during this quarter including: 1) an olive production seminar, 2) spring graduation, and 3) the Turfgrass Expo and Field Day. We formed a working relationship with Michael Garcia, President of the Florida Olive Council, and with his help held our first olive production workshop on 4 April featuring growers from northern Florida and southern Georgia. Presentations from that workshop, and from a previous workshop on pomegranate production, can be viewed on our website. A pomegranate orchard variety trial with over 20 varieties was planted this quarter; an olive variety trial orchard will be planted during the next few weeks. Dr. Mack Thetford is taking the lead in this effort, and we look forward to providing variety selection and production practice information to Panhandle growers that have interest in these emerging tree crops. On 2 May, six students graduated with B.S. degrees from our undergraduate teaching programs, five from Natural Resources and one from Environmental Horticulture. We are extremely proud of these students and of the great job our teaching faculty (Drs. Miller, Thetford, and Bohn) did in training them. On 18 June, Dr. Unruh reached a milestone with the 20th Turfgrass Expo and Field Day held at the Jay Research Facility. Well over 200 participants attended the event that showcased our cutting edge (pun intended) turfgrass research programs. Dr. Leon, Dr. Brecke and others provided informative presentations on turf cultural practices. During lunch, Dr. Unruh gave a presentation on the first 20 years of this much anticipated annual event – I have confidence he will deliver 20 more as good as the first 20. In addition to these events, Santa Rosa County and Escambia County Agricultural Extension Agents Mike Donahoe, John Atkins, Blake Thaxton, and Libby Johnson are demonstrating innovative agronomic and horticultural practices at the Jay Research Facility – their efforts provide valuable information to growers in our area and are appreciated. Lastly, none of these events or other aspects of our teaching, research, and extension programs could be accomplished without our dedicated technical and administrative staff that toils behind the scenes – kudos to them.

One of the most awaited actions at the WFREC is selection of a new Cropping Systems Agronomist faculty member. The person we hire will do much needed research and outreach to improve agronomic practices for producers in the Florida Panhandle and beyond. We have interviewed three qualified candidates, and anticipate having one of them in place within the next few months.

I wish everyone a productive summer.

GO GATORS!

UF Milton Campus Student Happenings

By Kevin Smith

When Dr. Wood first met his new students at the University of Florida's Milton campus, he told us "You are all doing the right thing, getting an education." That statement has proven to be true for both past graduates and recent. Some of us have started good jobs right out of school. I'm sure the rest of my classmates will find good jobs soon. Philip Garrett has landed a forester job at an awesome location, Point Washington State Forest, Destin. Ryan O'Connell has been hired full time at a Pensacola nursery where he was doing an internship. Julie Wood is doing an internship with the Black Water River State Forest. Julie is a smart student with honors to show for it, once the folks at the forestry work with her I am convinced she will be hired full time. Jacob Hullet was hired by Hatch Mott Macdonald Engineering and Consulting. And I am the new Executive Director of Santa Rosa Clean Community System.

Summer is also a time for field/lab and study abroad courses. Alex Steed is taking a couple of classes in Belize, Lea' Dawes is taking a class in New Zealand, and I just returned from a ten day Coastal Conservation Biology course at UF's Sea Horse Key marine laboratory. It was a great learning experience for my final undergrad class with great professors and students from Gainesville. If I can give any advice to my under classmates it is, never give up, keep studying, you can do it.



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IN THIS ISSUE

From the Director	1
Turfgrass Expo	2
Spring Graduation	2
Dr. Ajay Sharma	3
From Director (cont'd)	4
Student Happenings	4
Calendar of Events	5
Fall Tomato School	5
Student Plant Sale	5
Dr. Ramon Leon	6
WFREC Happenings	7
Summer Internships	8
Landing a Job	8
Mondays in Gardens	9
Doug Hatfield	9



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Jay Research Facility

Calendar of Events

July 4	Closed for Fourth of July —Have a safe and happy holiday
July 21	WFREC Advisory Board Meeting , 10:30am, Jay Conference Room
July 29	Field Corn Variety Field Day , 10am-12pm, Jay REC
July 31	Weed ID Workshop for County Agents , 8am-5pm, Jay REC
Aug 14-15	Month-by-Month , Adv Master Gardener Training, 8am-4pm, SRC Extension
Aug 21	Extension Farm Field Day , 8am-12pm, Jay REC
Now—Aug 21	Advanced registration for Fall 2014 Semester
Aug 22	Fall 2014 Registration
Aug 25	Fall Classes Begin
Sept 1	Closed for Labor Day —Have a safe and happy holiday
Sept 2-Oct 28	Fall Tomato School , 4 Tues nights 6pm-7:30pm, Jay REC (see below)
Sept 18	Santa Rosa County Farm Tour
Sept 19	Degree Application Deadline

For information on any of these events, please visit our website <http://wfrec.ifas.ufl.edu/>.

UPCOMING EVENT: Fall Tomato School

This fall the Escambia County Extension Service will be hosting a Fall Tomato School here at WFREC. Beginning September 2nd and for four Tuesday evenings between then and October 28th from 6pm to 7:30pm there will be workshops geared toward farmers interested in learning about small farm tomato production.

- **Sept. 2:** Transplanting, plasticulture and drip, and varieties
- **Sept. 23:** Nutrition (fertilization and deficiency symptoms), diseases and control, and spraying and calibration
- **Oct. 7:** Staking and trellising, pruning, IPM and insect scouting
- **Oct. 28:** Harvesting, post-harvest and storage, and marketing.

The cost is \$20 per class or \$60 for the entire course, payable at the first session. For more information, or to register, Call the UF/IFAS Extension Santa Rosa office at 850-623-3868.

Student Plant Sale

On April 5th, the UF Milton Student Club held a plant sale at the 2014 Flower and Garden Show held at the PSC Milton campus. All proceeds from the sale benefitted the UF Milton student club. This year they made \$4,500.00 to go towards supplies for the student office, field trips, learning materials, etc. Not only do the students raise much needed funds, but it's also a lesson in dealing with customers and a great volunteer experience. Next year come on out and visit. There are many great vendors and exhibits.



IN THIS ISSUE

From the Director	1
Turfgrass Expo	2
Spring Graduation	2
Dr. Ajay Sharma	3
From Director (cont'd)	4
Student Happenings	4
Calendar of Events	5
Fall Tomato School	5
Student Plant Sale	5
Dr. Ramon Leon	6
WFREC Happenings	7
Summer Internships	8
Landing a Job	8
Mondays in Gardens	9
Doug Hatfield	9

TAKE A MINUTE with...Dr. Ramon Leon

Dr. Ramon Leon has been a Weed Scientist/Assistant Professor here at WFREC since 2012. Previously, he was Research Coordinator and Weed Science Professor at EARTH University in Costa Rica. He received a PhD (2005) in Crop Production and Physiology with emphasis in Weed Science and Seed Science from Iowa State University and also received a PhD in Genetics from Iowa State the same year. Dr. Leon's research interests include integrated weed management in row crop and turfgrass systems, seed biology and seed bank dynamics, and weed evolution. He has conducted research in California, the Midwestern United States and Costa Rica on crops such as citrus, corn, grapevines, pastures, rice, soybeans, sugarcane, turfgrass and vegetables. His research has been published in many articles in internationally recognized scientific journals. Additionally, Dr. Leon was part of the Weedy and Invasive Plant Species Panel of the National Research Initiative of the USDA in 2007, and currently he is associate editor of Weed Technology and reviewer for several international journals.



Why did you choose weed science as a topic of study?

I was attracted to weed science because it combines three areas of interest to me: plant physiology, plant ecology and agriculture. Weed science can be applied in a way that the results provide a direct tangible benefit to society. I was also motivated by the fact that there are very, very few people working in the field.

What brought you to the University of Florida from Costa Rica?

The main reason is that I missed doing research. Research is a good balance of learning more and generating practical solutions. The US is one of the top countries in the world in research; it's one of the reasons there is so much success in this country. Growers here appreciate the benefit research has in agriculture. I was mainly teaching in Costa Rica and really missed the research aspect. The reason I chose Florida was because my wife wanted to live in a warm area. She was with me when I was in the Midwest and it was too cold there. Here, we have found the perfect place to be!

What do you enjoy most about your work here at WFREC?

I like many things about being at WFREC. I enjoy the environment here on the farm; I love being outdoors and enjoy the quietness of the rural environment. It's wonderful to be able to go outside directly to the research project and see how things are going. One great thing about WFREC is the diversity of projects going on here. There's a small number of faculty, but each has their own world of work and research going on. And the people here are friendly and committed to the jobs they do.

What advice do you have for students who want to study abroad but may be hesitant?

I've had the good fortune to work in many different countries. I've had good experiences and bad experiences, but I've never regretted any of it. Studying and working abroad gives you a broadened understanding of how things work. It puts your work in context and gives you a better appreciation for what you're doing. Working in other countries isn't about going on vacation or visiting vacation destinations; it's about understanding different realities, cultures and people. It helps you gain good judgment in life and international experience is a plus professionally, period! Having more points of comparison about how things are done in different places, enable you to come up with better ways to improve, and this is critical in a global economy.



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IN THIS ISSUE

From the Director	1
Turfgrass Expo	2
Spring Graduation	2
Dr. Ajay Sharma	3
From Director (cont'd)	4
Student Happenings	4
Calendar of Events	5
Fall Tomato School	5
Student Plant Sale	5
Dr. Ramon Leon	6
WFREC Happenings	7
Summer Internships	8
Landing a Job	8
Mondays in Gardens	9
Doug Hatfield	9

WFREC Happenings from the Past Three Months

One of the first things Dr. Wes Wood did as new Center Director was plan a variety trial olive orchard here at WFREC. In support of this new opportunity, on April 4th we held an **Olive Production Seminar**. Speakers included experts from across the state. (Photo to the right is Don Mueller, owner of Green Gate Olive Grove in Jackson, FL.)



April 22nd we had a **Farewell Luncheon for Darcy Telenko** who left WFREC to pursue an opportunity with Cornell University as Extension Vegetable Specialist in New York. (Photo to the left: Darcy Telenko planting corn variety trial earlier this year.)

April 22nd was also **student internship presentations**. Undergraduate students are required or highly encouraged (depending on program) to earn internship credits and make a presentation discussing that internship. This evening Alex Eaton, Ella Jones and Ryan O'Connell made presentations to a small group of faculty, staff, fellow students, employers and family members.

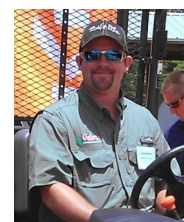
(Photo to the right is Alex Eaton.)



April 24 the Extension Service held a **Tomatoes at Twilight** Workshop here at WFREC in the heirloom tomato shade tunnel. This seminar was geared toward farmers interested in learning about small farm tomato production. There was a lot of great information provided to attendees and some hands on demonstrations.

(Photo above is Blake Thaxton with Santa Rosa County Extension.)

May 19 **Chad Stewart** started at WFREC as agricultural assistant, working with Greg Kimmons, farm manager.



May 22 was **Spring 2014 Graduation** (see page 2 for photos and information).



May 5th and 6th was the **WFREC Strategic Retreat** for faculty and staff at Adventures Unlimited. We did a half day of team building activities and then a day and half of various strategic planning meetings. (Photo at the left is Robin Vickers and Ramon Leon participating in a team building activity.)

June 18 was the **20th Annual Gulf Coast Turfgrass Expo** (see page 2 for photos and information).

June 26th WFREC hosted a **field trip from Gospel Projects** summer camp. GP was having a farm themed educational week at the summer camp and while here the students attended small workshops about high tunnels, fruit crops, peanut production, forestry and turfgrass. Some of the kids got a tractor demonstration and some got to pick blueberries. It's always fun when kids come out to visit!



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IN THIS ISSUE

From the Director	1
Turfgrass Expo	2
Spring Graduation	2
Dr. Ajay Sharma	3
From Director (cont'd)	4
Student Happenings	4
Calendar of Events	5
Fall Tomato School	5
Student Plant Sale	5
Dr. Ramon Leon	6
WFREC Happenings	7
Summer Internships	8
Landing a Job	8
Mondays in Gardens	9
Doug Hatfield	9

Summer Internships

Internships are a requirement for plant science students and strongly recommended for natural resource conservation students here at WFREC. Summer is a common time to complete an internship, so I thought it would be fun to check in with some students to see what they're doing.

Christie Wagner is a natural resource conservation student doing a summer internship with Dr. Kimberly Bohn, Silviculturist, and Justin McKeithen, senior lab technician. They are working on research related to gap dynamics in longleaf pine ecosystems at the Escambia Experimental Forest in Brewton, Alabama. Specifically they are looking at gaps that were created by single tree selection or group tree selection in addition to hurricane disturbance following hurricane Ivan, which occurred after these silvicultural methods had been applied. They are comparing difference in longleaf pine regeneration and growth at the sites. They are also identifying the potential causes of any differences in regeneration by comparing biotic and abiotic elements, such as light availability, soil characteristics, understory competition (hardwood vs. pine) and tree crown class at the sites. Christie says she is learning a lot and enjoying her time in the field.



Lilian Mauney is also a natural resource conservation student doing a summer internship with Dr. Bohn. Her project is much different, however. She's working on a study to determine the lethal levels of fire temperature and exposure on Japanese climbing fern biomass and spores. More specifically, to determine how fire intensity affects consumption of above-ground foliage with mature spores and whether fire intensity has any influence on mortality of spores already dispersed from the frond. This project involves putting spores in a convection oven at varying temperatures for varying time periods and then testing them to see which will germinate. Lilian is also working on a similar project with Dr. Mack Thetford, except those spores are being studying for germination rates after specified time periods, in years.



Cody English is an environmental horticulture student working with Blake Thaxton, Commercial Horticulture agent with the Santa Rosa County Extension agency. Cody has been working on an heirloom tomato variety trial being conducted here at WFREC, as well as other projects around the county.



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Landing a Job After Graduation...Kevin Smith

Many of our graduates land great jobs after graduation, thanks to all the hard work they put in during the months and years it takes to complete classes. One recent graduate, **Kevin Smith**, is now the executive director of Santa Rosa Clean Community System. One of his tasks is to promote and educate the public on environmental issues. He says he always wanted to be involved in protecting the environment for future generations. They also have a nursery that provides vegetation for the City of Milton and Santa Rosa county, and they sell to the general public as well. Kevin says the courses he took at UF gave him the knowledge and skills he needed to help educate the community on protection of the environment and to practice ethical land stewardship and conservation. Kevin invites you to visit their website at <http://www.srclean.org> or email him at srclean@aol.com.

IN THIS ISSUE

From the Director	1
Turfgrass Expo	2
Spring Graduation	2
Dr. Ajay Sharma	3
From Director (cont'd)	4
Student Happenings	4
Calendar of Events	5
Fall Tomato School	5
Student Plant Sale	5
Dr. Ramon Leon	6
WFREC Happenings	7
Summer Internships	8
Landing a Job	8
Mondays in Gardens	9
Doug Hatfield	9



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Mondays in the Gardens

Mondays in the Gardens is a seminar series hosted by the Friends of the Gardens (FOG) organization, which is responsible for coordinating the care and upkeep of the gardens located at Pensacola State College Milton campus.

Lectures have included topics such as pruning roses, raised beds, propagation, putting your garden to bed for the winter and shade gardens. They are held in the outdoor classroom located in the middle of the gardens. I had the pleasure of attending the lecture on shade gardens and was quite pleased with the amount of information, resources and knowledge I acquired within those two hours. The speakers included Mary Derrick, horticulture extension agent, and our own Dr. Mack Thetford, Plant Science professor here at UF Milton campus. After the group received several handouts and a short lecture, we broke off into two sections for a tour around the gardens, during which time Mary and Dr. Thetford pointed out various shade plants and spoke about some of their defining characteristics. At the end of the seminar a generous number of



the plants that were highlighted during the lecture and/or tour were given out as door prizes. There were 54 attendees this particular day, which was June 9th.



I highly recommend keeping an eye on their website: <http://www.friendsofthegardens-nwfl.com> to know when the next lecture is coming up. You can also like them on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/fog.nwfl>. One topic that will be presented this fall is Growing Gingers.

TAKE A MINUTE with...Doug Hatfield

Doug Hatfield is a member of the newly formed WFREC Advisory Council. He is a retired employee who worked at WFREC for 35 years. I took a few minutes to ask him some questions to get to know him better.



Why did you want to be a part of the WFREC Advisory Board?

Agriculture has always been an important part of who I am. I grew up working for many different types of farming operations. From the smallest early greenhouse operations, to vegetable production, cattle and hay operations and even with the biggest row crop farmers at the time. Agriculture is always in a state of flux. I hope to be able to bring some different views to the advisory committee.

How do you feel your 35 years' experience working here at WFREC will help you in your advisory capacity?

Thirty five years is a long time. In that time however I came to realize how important research and education is to keeping the producers ahead of the curve. One of the coolest things is to see the application of a project I worked on. I hope some of my experiences at UF can help shape the future of the WFREC.

How are you enjoying "retirement"?

Retirement, what's that?? With hay, cattle, all sorts of small animals and a construction project from time to time, life is as busy or busier than ever. When I left UF I just removed one hat and replaced it with another. I do however get to fish on week days sometimes.

Tell us a bit about your farm.

I have a small cattle operation. Most of the time I run around 70 head of mommy cows and market the yearlings at buying points and/or direct. Also produce about 200 acres of hay for myself plus custom bale for others. We also produce 150 acres of row crops and have a little timber.