

Floriculture Focus . . .
News from the Ellison Chair in
International Floriculture
Department of Horticultural Sciences

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[Chair Website – http://EllisonChair.tamu.edu](http://EllisonChair.tamu.edu)

Introductory Comments

Spring is in full swing for the floriculture industry and all who are associated with it, including those of us affiliated with universities. In this issue, we are reporting on several of our recent activities and progress. We are also providing highlights on two floriculture faculty, who are affiliated with departments outside Horticultural Sciences here at Texas A&M, Larry Barnes (Plant Pathology and Microbiology) and Carlos Bogran (joint appointment in Entomology and Plant Pathology and Microbiology).

Chair Activities and Progress

Following are briefs of happenings related to the Chair since our last communication.

Floriculture Forum - Grand Rapids, Michigan - February 23-26. This was my second Floriculture Forum. It provided an excellent opportunity to network with floriculture faculty members nationally as well as a few industry participants. We toured three large greenhouse operations in the Grand Rapids vicinity. Participants from TAMU included Terri Starman, Cynthia McKenney, and myself. Cynthia made an excellent presentation on her distance education experiences on a session related to that topic.

There were lively discussions on several topics of interest including approaches to gaining sustainable program funding (a seemingly universal topic).

Internship Workshop - College Station - March 8. Our first-ever Internship Workshop was well received by all participants (36 in all, including industry, faculty and students). Advisory Committee participants included Jim Prewitt, Jimmy Klepac, Jack Weatherford, Ellen and Jim Ellison, and PJ Ellison-Kalil. The focus of the Workshop was on developing successful internship programs. Each industry participant developed a customized internship program statement for their operation. The Workshop will be held next year in conjunction with the TAMU Horticulture Career Fair.

Advisory Committee Meeting - College Station - March 9. The principal focus of the meeting was on the Vision and Strategic Plan for the Chair. The Vision/Plan focuses on Mission, Vision, Role of the Chair, Strategic Objectives, Programmatic Areas of Emphasis, and Implementation. A few enhancements were suggested in the lively discussion and they are being incorporated into the Vision/Plan. A copy of the Vision/Plan is available upon request. Progress on other items reviewed in this Newsletter was reported.

Marketing the Chair and TAMU Horticulture/Floriculture Several stories on activities and recognitions have been provided to a large group of industry magazine editors. Responses have been encouraging. Among others, Chris Beytes provided a nice brief in his newsletter ACRES ONLINE (sent to you earlier) and Jennifer White is doing a more in-depth story on the Chair in GROWER TALKS. We have set up an approach now to get stories to the editors on a regular basis.

SAF Congressional Action Days - Washington, D.C. - March 19-22. Advisory Committee participants in this important event included **Jimmy (and April) Klepac, Dianna Doss, Jim Ellison, Stan Pohmer, Ernesto Velez** and myself. There were several others from industry among the participants from Texas. The big overriding issue is immigration reform, and the "SAF/ANLA message" was provided directly to Congressional Offices nationally. The topic is a very controversial one, as you know, and it is difficult to arrive at viable solutions that have broad support. Another goal at SAF-CAD was to increase support for the National Floriculture and Nursery Crop Research Initiative; it is our TAMU goal to support a significant increase in this Initiative, and in the process, to significantly increase the funding coming our way. **Jim Ellison** and I have been invited to participate in a Workshop on this Initiative on June 12-15 in Portland, Oregon and we will be there. Other TAMU participants presenting their research findings include **Kevin Heinz, Fred Davies, Carlos Bogran** and **Scott Ludwig**.

Inaugural TAMU Distinguished Lecture in International Floriculture
- College Station - April 11.

Charlie Hall of University of Tennessee provided a superb lecture on "The U.S. Floriculture Industry: Structural Changes, Marketing Practices, and Economic Impacts". We had a good turnout of faculty and students from Horticultural Sciences and Agricultural Economics (Charlie's previous



home department here) as well as Entomology, Plant Pathology, and Biological and Agricultural Engineering. Advisory Committee members **Jimmy Klepac** and **Ellen and Jim Ellison** participated as well. Copies of Charlie's lecture are available upon request.

Floriculture Faculty Highlights

In this issue, we are highlighting **Drs. Carlos Bogran** and **Larry Barnes**, College Station.



Carlos Bogran

Carlos Bográn is an Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist in Entomology and Plant Pathology & Microbiology at TAMUS Riverside Campus in Bryan. His extension education and applied research programs focus on development and implementation of integrated pest and disease management (IPM) programs for the greenhouse and nursery industries. Among his educational programs, Bográn leads a grower technical certification program in Spanish entitled 'Taller Manejo Integrado de Plagas', Spanish for integrated pest management-workshop, targeted at Hispanic workers in the greenhouse industry. The majority of field workers in the industry have little formal education in plant production techniques and pest management concepts and speak little or no English. The purpose of the five- module program is to provide workers with basic knowledge on IPM and the pest problems that impact ornamental crops. The sessions cover

principles of pest and disease management, basic biology of insects, mites and pathogens, plant health maintenance, pesticide management and integration of control tactics. Armed with this knowledge, workers are in the position to 1) understand their role in the successful implementation of IPM strategies, 2) participate in sanitation, pest detection and monitoring practices, and 3) directly contribute to plant quality assurance efforts to increase profitability and reduce health and environmental risks.

Bográn is part of a multidisciplinary team funded by the USDA-Floriculture and Nursery Research Initiative and led by Dr. **Kevin Heinz** that, along with Drs. **Amanda Chau**, **Scott Ludwig** (Entomology) and Dr. **Fred Davies**, conducts research and educational activities as parts of a project entitled 'Floriculture and Nursery Crop Production with Reduced Cultural and Pest Management Inputs' (see *Floriculture Focus*, February 2006). The team has recently begun a pilot program to establish a grower-industry-academia alliance that will conduct educational programs and demonstration research at grower operations. The intent of the alliance is to facilitate communication of research results and more effectively respond to current and emerging plant protection issues in the floriculture industry.

Bográn's research interests in floriculture IPM include: 1) integration of chemical and biological control against key pests, 2) insecticide resistance management, and 3) host plant resistance to common diseases. Preliminary results of commercial scale tests on control of two-spotted spider mites in Mandevilla have shown that predatory mites in combination with a selective miticide can be a cost-effective, safer and more efficient alternative to weekly miticide sprays. With funding from the floriculture initiative and the Gloeckner Foundation, and in collaboration with Dr. **Patricia Pietrantonio** and **Terri Junek** (Entomology), Bográn has initiated an insecticide resistance monitoring program focusing on *Bemisia* whiteflies and imidacloprid. Data from this monitoring program will be used to develop insecticide resistance management programs for the Texas floriculture industry. Bográn, Dr. **Brent Pemberton** and Dr. **Tom Isakeit** (Plant

Pathology) have recently completed a laboratory, greenhouse and field evaluation of *Rhizoctonia* tolerance and garden performance in 12 new and conventional wax Begonia cultivars. Results show that several cultivars exhibit disease tolerance relative to susceptible ones but suggest garden performance is not always associated with disease tolerance and that other factors are likely involved.

Additional information about Dr. Bográn can be found at:

<http://insects.tamu.edu/people/faculty/bogranc.cfm>



Larry Barnes

Larry Barnes is Professor and Extension Plant Pathologist in the Department of Plant Pathology and Microbiology. He is director of the Texas Plant Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (TPDDL), located at College Station, and also has Extension educational responsibilities for greenhouse crops, nursery crops, and landscape and interiorscape ornamentals.

The Diagnostic Lab receives over 3000 plant specimens annually for plant disease diagnosis. Although the lab is responsible for all types of plant disease problems, over 90% of the specimens received in a given year are usually ornamentals. Most of the ornamental specimens are submitted from Texas producers but the lab also commonly receives specimens from other states as well as some specimens from out of the

country. Plant disease testing of out-of-state ornamentals helps the lab stay on top of new disease problems that might not have occurred yet in Texas.

The TPDDL is designed and equipped to diagnose most types of plant disease problems and is equipped with some of the most sophisticated and modern diagnostic instrumentation available. Because the “need to know” is often critical when disease problems occur in commercial ornamental production, the lab strives for fast specimen turn-around time so that the disease diagnosis and a control recommendation can be returned to the grower as quickly as possible.

The Texas Plant Disease Diagnostic Lab is also responsible for Homeland Security issues concerning plant health. As a member of the Southern Plant Diagnostic Network and the National Plant Diagnostic Network, the TPDDL is responsible to the USDA, APHIS and Plant Protection and Quarantine, and to the Texas Department of Agriculture for providing early detection of any potentially harmful plant pathogen that might threaten United States or Texas agriculture.

Over the past several years, the TPDDL has been involved in coordinated state, regional, and national testing of plant material moving into Texas to detect both the bacterial wilt pathogen of geranium (*Ralstonia solanacearum*, race 3, biovar 2), and the sudden oak death fungal pathogen, *Phytophthora ramorum*. The establishment of either of these “restricted pathogens” in Texas ornamental production could have a serious negative impact of the Texas ornamental economy.

The Texas Plant Disease Diagnostic Lab values interactions with ornamental producers and values suggestions and inputs as to how the lab can better serve the Texas ornamentals industry.

Concluding Comments

Our current activities are focused toward developing entry-level worker training tools, pursuing a Southwest Center of Excellence, and

increasing funding for the TAMU Floriculture Program. Upcoming events for Chair participation include the National Floriculture Initiative Workshop in Portland, Oregon on June 12-15, the Seeley Conference at Cornell University in Ithaca, NY on June 24-27, and the OFA Short Course in Columbus, Ohio on July 8 – 11.

Hope Easter was good for you in many ways.



Mission of the Ellison Chair

The mission of this Chair is to advance the health and vitality of the floriculture industry, on a national and international scope, through exemplary academic leadership, cutting-edge applied research, innovative extension outreach programs, and by mentoring well-educated, impassioned leaders to support the future of floriculture.

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