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more ....
November and an unusually early fall frost quickly brings us to the close of this year’s growing season and the beginning of the holiday season.

Our department will celebrate Thanksgiving with the Department of Entomology on Tuesday, Nov. 26th with a pot-luck meal with the departments providing meat, dressing and potatoes. If you happen to be in the area, please feel free to stop in and have lunch with us. Serving begins at 11:45. The department will be closed Thursday, Nov. 28 and Friday Nov. 29 as we celebrate with our families.

November also brings us into meeting season, with the Agronomy Society of America (ASA) and Crop Science Society of America (CSSA) and Soil Science Society of America meetings leading the way in San Antonio next week. We look forward to the Beltwide Cotton Conference, AgriLife Conference, Texas Plant Protection Conference, PAG, AIG and more in the coming months.

We have been very active this month with the Turfgrass Field day, Bennett Women’s Conference, Genome Editing Symposium, Surface Mine Reclamation Workshop and many fall field tours (see stories in newsletter).

I also had the opportunity to participate in the CAST annual meeting in Fayetteville, Arkansas and to explore the potential for new publications that impact our science.

Congratulations to all our faculty and students who were recognized or earned awards at the ASA, CSSA, SSSA meetings (see the story on page 3). We were pleased at the number of students who presented posters or oral presentations at the meetings.

Congratulations to Dr. Vijay Singh on his recent appointment as Assistant Professor at Virginia Tech.

Our Agronomy Society students had a better year with the corn maze with significantly less rainout days. We appreciate their hard work and dedication, and commend them for a great corn crop. A special shout out to the club advisors.

Several of our students have been selected to participate in the tri-societies SEED Ambassadors program which prepares scientists to work with policymakers. Congratulations to them (see article page 12).

We continue to have great success with grants with several of our faculty receiving news about grants in the past month. Opportunities are being explored with several companies at this time including many involved with the hemp industry. I appreciate those involved with hosting as they arrive for visits. We also are working with several to complement our efforts through visiting scientists and scholars.

We are currently recruiting for the wheat extension specialist, cotton extension specialists, turf agronomist, legume breeder, and soil pedologists. A big thanks to the committees for their excellent work and looking forward to your participation as we schedule interviews. It is truly exciting to be filling these positions and we look forward to adding over the next year.

The semester is winding down, with the next graduation to be December 13 at 2:00 p.m.

Holiday Open House for faculty and staff will be part of the retreat this year, so some from the centers may join in the festivity.

You can support Soil and Crop Sciences research, teaching and extension outreach with your tax-deductible donations.

More Information can be found at:

http://soilcrop.tamu.edu/giving/
A Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service leader will be honored along with other Texas A&M faculty and students for their professional achievements Nov. 10-13 in the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center, San Antonio.

The recognitions will be made by the Crop Sciences Society of America, or CSSA; the American Society of Agronomy, or ASA; and the Soil Sciences Society of America, or SSSA, during their annual conference.

ASA Fellow

Larry Redmon, Ph.D., will be named an ASA Fellow on Nov. 12. Redmon is the associate department head and AgriLife Extension program leader for the Department of Soil and Crop Sciences at Texas A&M, administering one of the largest agronomic extension units in the country.

He also serves as the AgriLife Extension state forage specialist, where he participates in educational programs across the state; and he serves as AgriLife Extension’s first endowed specialist responsible for oversight of the Bennett Trust Endowment and associated land stewardship programs in the Edwards Plateau.

ASA’s annual awards are presented for outstanding contributions to agronomy through education, national and international service, and research. Fellow is the highest recognition bestowed by ASA. Members nominate colleagues based on their professional achievements and meritorious service.

Redmon is a certified professional in forage and grassland, wildlife biology, turfgrass management and rangeland management. His research and educational outreach focus on establishment, management and utilization of forages to improve production systems and protect valuable natural resources.

Internationally recognized for his work in forage management, he has made presentations to delegations from Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Brazil, Bulgaria, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Poland, Tunisia and Venezuela.

Redmon has garnered $7.8 million in grants, produced 32 refereed journal articles and 98 Extension publications, helped to train 35 graduate students, and has participated in 1,275 educational programs with over 82,000 attendees.

He has provided leadership for both ASA and CSSA, and at the regional, state and local levels in educational program and materials development in both Oklahoma and Texas. He currently serves as associate editor for the Agrosystems, Geosciences and Environment publication.

Redmon previously received two Certificate of Excellence awards from ASA for the Lone Star Healthy Streams program, as well as for his electronic newsletter, “The Pasture Gazette.”

He earned a bachelor’s degree in agronomy from Stephen F. Austin State University and a doctorate in range science from Texas A&M. He spent six years with Oklahoma State University before joining AgriLife Extension in 1999 as a forage specialist at Overton. He moved to College Station in 2004.

Other Award Winners:

Golden Opportunity Scholars – Kade Flynn, a College Station native, is a junior geology major who works in the soils lab at Texas A&M.

Frank D. Keim Graduate Fellowship – Nicole Shigley, of Spring, TX, is working on her master’s degree in soil science. Shigley was a Golden Opportunity Scholar last year, and recently coached the soil judging team as they qualified for nationals.

Greenfield Scholars - ASA - Gabriel Janish, of Bellville, is a junior working toward his plant and environmental soil science degree. He was part of the Champion Aggie Quiz Bowl team at the Students of Agronomy, Soils and Environmental Sciences conference a year ago.
Gerald O. Mott Award
CSSA – Aniruddha Maity, of Kolkata, India, a doctoral student in plant breeding. His research is focused on the physiological and molecular aspects of seed dormancy and shattering in ryegrass.

Lloyd R. Frederick Soil Teaching Travel Study Award
SSSA - Julie Howe, Ph.D., Texas A&M AgriLife Research soil chemistry and fertility associate professor, College Station.

Aniruddha Maity

National Association of Plant Breeders Borlaug Undergraduate Scholars – Sarah Marsh, Arbuckle, California, a senior plant and environmental soil science student. She is a member of the undergraduate Agronomy Society, along with participating in a study abroad program to Brazil. She has been recognized with the Texas A&M President’s Endowed Scholarship, as well as numerous department-level scholarships.

Chris Stiegler Turf Science Student Travel Award and Fellowship – CSSA
- This award will be presented to both Boaxin “Bob” Chang, a doctoral student in soil sciences from Hohhot, Inner Mongolia, and Will Bowling, a master’s student in turfgrass science from Suwanee, Georgia.

Sarah Marsh

Boaxin “Bob” Chang

Will Bowling

Caitlyn Lakey

Caitlyn Lakey of Porter, TX, received a U.S. Department of Agriculture - National Institute of Food and Agriculture internship earlier in the year and will be recognized at the meetings. Lakey is working on her master’s degree in plant breeding. She also has previously been a Golden Opportunity Scholar.

Chris Stiegler Turf Science Student Travel Award and Fellowship – CSSA
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Caitlyn Lakey

Going to Nationals!!

The team consists of Kade Flynn, a junior Geology major; Nickolas Frisbee, a senior Plant and Environmental Soil Science (PSSC) major; Cody Garcia, a senior PSSC major; Marcus Rose, a senior Forestry major; Ashtyn Stufflebeam, a senior PSSC major. They are coached by Nicole Shigley, a Master of Science student in Soil Science under the supervision of Dr. Peyton Smith.

The Texas A&M University Soil Judging Team represented well at the Region IV Collegiate Soils Judging contest hosted by the University of Arkansas in October. The team placed third overall, and placed 2nd in the pit. They will now advance to the national contest at the Ohio State University in April, 2020.

Individually, the Aggies also represented well with Flynn claiming 4th place individual and Garcia placing 7th out of the 33 students in the contest.

“I am so proud of how these students did, and I cannot wait for the next round!” said Coach Shigley.

The top two teams in this contest were Oklahoma State University (1st) and Texas Tech University (2nd).

The Texas A&M Soils Judging Team - from left to right Cody Garcia, Ashyn Stufflebeam, Marcus Rose, Nicole Shigley - coach, Nick Frisbee and Kade Flynn.

The Aggie Soil Judging Team practices in the pit prior to the regional contest at the University of Arkansas.
Engelke to be honored with 2019 Turfgrass Breeder’s Cup

Dr. Milt Engelke, Professor Emeritus in the Department of Soil and Crop Sciences, will receive the Turfgrass Breeders Association’s Breeder’s Cup Award during the Agronomy Society of America meeting in San Antonio November 13.

Engelke earned the honor for his work on Diamond zoysiagrass, released in 1996 under U.S. plant patent 10,636.

“We are very fortunate to have leaders and visionaries like Dr. Engelke in the turfgrass industry who have laid a strong foundation for a strong future,” said Dr. Ambika Chandra, Texas A&M AgriLife Research turfgrass breeder and successor to Dr. Engelke. “The Breeder’s Cup award is deserving recognition to Dr. Engelke’s contributions and the impact of Diamond cultivar in the turfgrass industry.”

Bred under the experimental name DALZ8502, Diamond was the finest textured zoysiagrass at the time of its release with the potential to provide a viable alternative to golf courses struggling to keep creeping bentgrass alive during the heat of the summer or to golf courses with heavy shade issues where bermudagrasses were failing, his nomination states.

Engelke served as the turfgrass breeder at the Texas A&M AgriLife Center in Dallas from 1980 through 2007. During that time, he developed and released 16 cultivars of three turfgrass species, seven of which were zoysiagrass cultivars. According to nominators, some of those cultivars set industry standards, including Diamond.

“One of his major contributions to the turfgrass industry has been the zoysiagrass germplasm collection trip to the Pacific Rim he made with Mr. Jack Murray in 1982,” Chandra said. “They covered tremendous grounds in Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and the Philippines, and brought back over 750 unique accessions of zoysiagrass representing eight of the eleven zoysiagrass species.”

TBA awards the Breeder’s Cup to the turfgrass breeder and cultivar that best exemplify originality in development. Through this award they hope to encourage breeders to think and act outside the box to advance turfgrasses.

Harvesting corn at Bushland

Jourdan Bell, Ph.D., AgriLife Extension Specialist in Amarillo, shared these photos of Dr. Wenwei Xu, Ph.D., harvesting his corn plots in Bushland. Xu is a professor in the Department of Soil and Crop Sciences and Texas A&M AgriLife Research corn breeder in Lubbock.
Dr. Page W. Morgan, retired Professor in the Texas A&M University Department of Soil and Crop Sciences, passed away peacefully in Abilene, Texas, on Friday, Sept. 27. He was 86 years old.

Page Wesley Morgan was born on April 3, 1933, to Vernon Page Ikard Morgan and Guy Wesley Morgan, in Phoenix, Arizona, while they were living in a tent city for Depression-era migrants. When his parents returned with him to Texas, he spent his childhood in Wichita Falls and Iowa Park. While in high school, he became active in the county 4-H club, where he not only won awards in speech and debate, but also met Joyce Broseh, a cute, spunky girl from across the county who became his lifelong love.

Page earned his B.S. in Range Science from Texas A&M University in 1955. He and Joyce were married a month later, on June 3, and moved to Newport News, Virginia, where Page completed his army service before returning to College Station to begin graduate studies. By 1961, he had completed an M.S. and Ph.D. in Plant Physiology, and was hired into the A&M faculty.

As a member of the faculty at Texas A&M, Dr. Morgan had a productive career as a research scientist, leader of academic organizations, and publisher of important research. Following an early career focused on cotton research, he turned his attention to sorghum. Page was quiet and unassuming; whenever someone would ask Page about the nature of his work, he would smile, look sheepishly down at the ground, sort of chuckle, and reply something like “Well, you see, plants have hormones…”

Despite such humility, the scientific break-throughs of Page and his colleagues advanced the state of scientific knowledge and global agricultural production through a myriad of important academic publications. He received worldwide acknowledgement in his field: he was editor of the journal Plant Physiology, served as 1980-81 president of the American Society of Plant Physiologists, and authored or co-authored dozens of academic publications, including “Ethylene in Plant Biology”.

Page was interested in applied science as well as in theory; he not only enjoyed frequent interchanges with colleagues in the Texas AgriLife Extension Service, but also worked for several decades as an external consultant for Union Carbide, where he monitored the impact of their South Texas factory emissions on surrounding crops. As one A&M colleague recently remarked, “Page Morgan’s legacy lives on through his former students and post-docs.”

In 2002, after 42 years on faculty, Dr. Morgan retired from A&M, after which he and Joyce enjoyed church life, their family and friends, and A&M sports.

When Joyce underwent a health crisis in 2011, Page faithfully cared for her until her death in 2016. During those last years of Joyce’s life, and as his own health declined, Page enjoyed the warm friendship and support of his daughter Cathy and her family. In 2018, he moved to Abilene to be near son Ronnie and his wife, Janine.

Page and Joyce instilled in their children a love for Jesus Christ, the Bible, and the life of the church. Throughout 60 years of marriage, their life revolved around the church rhythms of Sundays and Wednesdays, and for many of those years, their home echoed with the sounds, smells and tastes of Christian community, as they were renowned for their hospitality. Both served as Bible school teachers, instilled in their children the beauty and wisdom of Judeo-Christian scripture, and offered leadership in the church. Those who know Page well recognize the role he often played as chairmen of the elders, helping to focus and clarify discussions. While he had his own conservative inclinations, he always sought to reconcile differing opinions in order to ensure peace and cohesion.

Page was preceded in death by his son Randall Page Morgan (d.2005) and his wife Joyce Broseh Morgan (d.2016). He is survived by his sister Mary Buckley of Fort Myers, Florida, and brother Jerry M. Morgan of Wichita Falls; daughter Catherine Elaine Smith, son-in-law Steven J. Smith, and grandsons Cord and Garrett Smith, all of College Station; son Ronald J. Morgan and daughter-in-law Janine Paden Morgan of Abilene, along with granddaughters Lara Morgan of Austin, Texas and Daniela Morgan of Chiang Rai, Thailand.
New St. Augustinegrass hybrids highlighted at annual turfgrass field day

Turfgrass needs to be drought tolerant, shade tolerant and disease resistant in order to thrive in Texas. A Texas A&M AgriLife Research turfgrass breeder discussed genetically engineered St. Augustinegrass events and hybrids bred to meet these criteria during the recent Texas A&M AgriLife Turfgrass Field Day in College Station.

Ambika Chandra, Ph.D., a turfgrass breeder in the Department of Soil and Crop Sciences based at the AgriLife research and extension center in Dallas, and Lucas Freshour, from Scotts Miracle-Gro, are working together to test Pro-Vista St. Augustinegrass for the Texas turfgrass industry.

“ProVista is a new technology developed by the Scotts Miracle-Gro Company by introducing genes into Floratam and Raleigh, two very old and very successful cultivars of St. Augustine grass that have worked very well in our industry,” Chandra said. “The result is a St. Augustinegrass that is resistant to glyphosate-non-selective herbicide. It also has a dwarfing effect, which limits the vertical growth of the plants and reduces the frequency of mowing.”

“Scotts has been working on this for 22 years and ProVista St. Augustine is already commercially available in Florida,” Freshour said. “We expect to have 2,000 acres in commercial production by the end of the year, but we don’t want to push those too hard in Texas because we need more cold hardiness here. That is where Chandra’s hybrids come in.”

Chandra explained that she is crossing the base genetics developed by Scotts with elite germplasms developed by AgriLife Research to create a cultivar that will flourish in the Texas environment.

“At the end of the day, we are looking not only for reduced mowing and glyphosate resistance, but also for drought tolerance, shade tolerance, disease resistance and other traits that are important to us here,” Chandra said.

One of the challenges of this breeding effort is that Floratam is sterile. The maternal plant does not produce enough nutrition for the embryo to develop into a mature seed. To overcome this, Chandra and her team use embryo rescue technology - removing the embryo 21 days after making pollinations and growing it in the lab in a sucrose-based tissue culture medium.

Advance lines and hybrids with the ProVista technology are being tested in College Station and Dallas, as well as at Milberger’s Landscape and Nursery, a turfgrass producer near San Antonio, TX, where they are evaluating the cycle of production and how well it can be harvested for sod.

During the field day, participants had the opportunity to look at the test plots, which had been sprayed with glyphosate 10 days prior, to see the effect on the new hybrids, the parent cultivars and St. Augustine grasses without the ProVista technology. Research Assistant Syed Ahmed explained that the plots are all mowed to 3 inches and monitored for weed pressure.

“In the check plots we manually pull weeds, but we spray Roundup® on the others and watch to see if it gets dinged up or not,” Ahmed explained. “So far the ProVista is a success.”

The field day also highlighted other research being done at the College Station facility, including evaluation of alternative landscapes, the use of spent coffee grounds as a soil amendment, the effects of wetting agents in sandcapped systems, options for controlling Poa annual bluegrass and more.

The annual field day alternates locations each year, with the next to be held at the new research and extension Center in Dallas.
Research topics included (clockwise from the top): Poa control, alternative landscapes, weed control methods, and sand capping.

Other topics highlighted at the field day included: (from left) sprayer calibration, athletic field impact testing, and soil health in turfgrass.
Texas rice growers faced a challenging 2019 due to early and late-season rains, according to a Texas A&M AgriLife Research expert.

Ted Wilson, Ph.D., Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Center director, Beaumont, said reports on yields and quality are too preliminary to determine likely outcomes, but he expects a below-average year due to late plantings and late rains that included flooding in Texas’ rice-growing regions.

Yields in recent years have averaged around 8,000 pounds per acre, Wilson said.

Texas’ rice crop includes 100% of main crop acreage and the acres that producers decide to take to a second harvest, also known as the ratoon crop. Producer surveys indicate 64 percent of producers took their acres to ratoon, but Wilson said he expects fewer acres actually producing ratoon rice.

Wilson said the wet spring will likely contribute to lower yields this growing season. Flooding from Tropical Storm Imelda likely didn’t help remaining stands of the main crop or ratoon potential.

The effects of late plantings and Imelda are still unknown because harvest surveys from producers, which help assess yields and quality are only now coming in, Wilson said.

By Sept. 27, around 97% of the main rice crop had been harvested, Wilson said. But rains from Tropical Storm Imelda delivered up to 40-plus inches of rainfall along rice-producing areas of southern Texas.

“Wet springs tend to delay planting. For every week of delay, there is a yield penalty because an increasing amount of grain is produced when there are higher nighttime temperatures, which reduces rice plant’s efficiency,” Wilson said. “Now there are questions about a good portion of the ratoon crop, especially if there was lodging due to mud.”

Delays

The majority of rice planting in Texas usually occurs by the last week of March or first week of April west of Houston and the second to third week of April east of Houston, he said. But there were reports of planting as late as June, and some producers missed their window to plant altogether.

Delays meant main crop harvest, which typically occurs beginning in July, extended into September, he said.

“Our research shows you lose 310 pounds per acre per week each week harvest is delayed due to higher nighttime temperatures chewing up plant energy,” he said. “So, if you were planting in June east of Houston, that’s eight to nine weeks times 310 pounds per acre. Those are considerable losses.”

Wilson said individual growers did very well this year, but crop performance will likely depend on location, planting and growing conditions and any other challenges.

Other challenges

Pests were localized in Texas rice this year, but diseases like kernel smut impacted several producers, Wilson said. The fungal disease has become progressively worse over the past five to six years.

“It hurts grain, and some individual fields where kernel smut was found had loads of rice rejected by driers and mills,” he said.

Narrow brown leaf spot is another disease that is increasing in severity and is affecting yields, Wilson said. There is no highly effective treatment for brown leaf spot.

“I’m very impressed with Texas rice growers, but when you face challenges like those presented this year, it can be difficult,” he said. “Hopefully there weren’t too many losses from Imelda, and the ratooned crop does well.”
Michael Baring, Texas A&M AgriLife Research scientist and peanut breeder in the Department of Soil and Crop Sciences, was named a Fellow by the American Peanut Research and Education Society (APRES) at the annual meeting in Auburn, AL, earlier this year.

Baring joined the department in 1990, with research focused on improving peanut cultivars. He was a first author on the release of Tamrun OL11 in 2011, second author on the release of Schubert in 2019 and a co-author on TAMVa114, a high oleic Valencia-type peanut released in 2014.

Baring earned his Bachelor of Science in Agronomy and Master of Science in plant breeding and genetics from Texas A&M in 1989 and 2006, respectively.

He retired earlier this year, but continues to work part-time.

Vijay Singh, Ph.D., previously a Texas A&M AgriLife Research assistant research scientist, in the weed science program, has joined the faculty at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech).

Singh is now an Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist in weed science and precision agriculture at the Eastern Shore Agricultural Research and Extension Center in Painter, VA.

“My current focus is to study weed ecology and physiology pertaining to herbicide resistance issues and management in general,” Singh said. “I am also working on digital agriculture and data driven technologies under Virginia Tech’s Smart Farming Initiative.”

Singh had been with Texas A&M University’s Department of Soil and Crop Sciences since 2015, working with Dr. Muthu Bagavathiannan. He was an assistant coach with the Texas A&M weed judging team for the past four years. He will continue to collaborate with Bagavathiannan on research projects.

Aniruddha Maity, a Ph.D. student in Plant Breeding under Dr. Muthu Bagavathiannan, was awarded the 2019 Endeavor Research Leadership Award by the Department of Education and Training in Australia.

The award includes a six-month research visit at the University of Western Australia.

“This award will allow me to travel to a country I have not been to before and learn about weed ecology in their diverse cropping systems,” Maity said.

During his visit, Maity will continue his research at the Australian Herbicide Resistance Initiative on seed dormancy and the resistance status of barley grass (Hordeum spp.) and brome grass (Bromus spp.), which are a significant problem to farmers in that country.
Surface Mine Reclamation Workshop

Recipients of the Surface Mine Reclamation Workshop scholarship included from left to right: Maria Velazquez, Lisette Aechlimann, Emily Bush, Celeste Branstom and Nickolas Frisbee. Not pictured is Robert Credeur.

Six undergraduate students from Texas A&M University, including four from the Department of Soil and Crop Sciences, received scholarships from the Surface Mine Reclamation Workshop in October.

The scholarships are a major part of the two day workshop, with about $4,000 handed out each year.

This year’s recipients included:

- **Lisette Aechlimann** - senior Plant and Environmental Soil Science
- **Emily Bush** - a senior majoring in Plant and Environmental Soil Sciences
- **Nickolas Frisbee** - a senior Plant and Environmental Soil Sciences major
- **Maria Velazquez** - a senior Plant and Environmental Soil Sciences major
- **Celeste Branstom** - a sophomore Biological and Agricultural Engineering major
- **Robert Credeur** - a junior majoring in Biological and Agricultural Engineering

The workshop is planned by industry reclamation personnel and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension specialists. It attracts mining company representatives, regulatory agencies, coal mine reclamation specialists, seed and equipment vendors and others interested in land reclamation from across the state.

It focuses on the efforts of Texas mining operations to reclaim surface mines and restore the lands to a productive state.

The workshop gave industry personnel an opportunity to meet with various vendors involved with reclamation efforts.

Francye Hutchins, Education Director for the Texas Mining Reclamation Association (TMRA) told workshop participants about the TMRA camps that are held for educators. These events help teachers understand mine reclamation efforts and provide educational activities for their students.

Dr. Scott Nolte, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension State Weed Specialist explained weed identification and herbicide options during the surface mine reclamation workshop.

One of the workshop organizers, Dr. Jake Mowrer, Texas AgriLife Extension Specialist, introduced the scholarship recipients.

Francye Hutchins, Education Director for the Texas Mining Reclamation Association (TMRA) told workshop participants about the TMRA camps that are held for educators. These events help teachers understand mine reclamation efforts and provide educational activities for their students.
Students selected as SEED ambassadors

By: Beth Ann Luedeker

Three graduate students from the Texas A&M University Department of Soil and Crop Sciences have been selected to take part in the Scientists Engaging and Educating Decision-makers (SEED) Ambassador program.

Holly Lane, a Master’s student under the supervision of Dr. Seth Murray; Mark McDonald, a doctoral student under the supervision of Drs. Katie Lewis and Terry Gentry; and Rahul Raman, a doctoral student under Drs. Nithya Rajan and Haly Neely, will be representing Texas A&M and our department for the next year.

The SEED Ambassador program is a year-long advocacy training program through the Agronomy Society of America (ASA), the Crop Science Society of America (CSSA) and Soil Science Society of America (SSSA) providing an opportunity for participants to form trusting relationships with members of Congress.

Ambassadors will begin to work with members of the tri-societies science policy staff this fall to hone their advocacy skills which they will put into action throughout the year.

McDonald said his interest in the project came from his passion for science policy. “I have attended the Congressional Visits Day with the tri-societies for the past two years and have been looking for a way to be more involved,” McDonald said. “I am excited about this program and the training it offers not only to practice being an advocate for science to lawmakers, but also for the opportunity to network with other students and professionals interested in science policy.”

Raman chose to participate in the program as a way to connect with policymakers to help him work with them on policy related to food security, sustainable agriculture and climate change. “By the end of this training, I hope to have a good understanding of the legislative process and be a fluent science communicator to policy audiences and society,” Raman said.

Like McDonald, Lane had previously participated in the Congressional Visits Day put on by the societies. “I really enjoyed that process and felt like I had a knack for connecting with our policymakers,” Lane said. “I hope to expand on those skills through this program and become a better advocate for science.”

Matt Brown and his children as they mourn the loss of Katie Brown, wife and mother, who passed away October 3. Matt is an Extension Program Specialist and Ph.D. student under the supervision of Dr. Larry Redmon.

Linda Carpenter and her family as they mourn the loss of her husband, Jim, who passed away October 23. Linda worked with Dr. Hossner and in the teaching office at the time of her retirement.

The family of Col. Sam Sifers, 89, who passed away in September. Sam worked at the Turfgrass Field Lab under Dr. Jim Beard.

The family of Dr. Page Morgan who passed away in October. Morgan was a retired professor of Plant Physiology in our department.

Please keep these members of our Soil & Crop Sciences family in your thoughts and prayers.
Department of Soil and Crop Sciences faculty, staff and students held their 4th annual chili cook-off as part of the State Employees Charitable Campaign. All the proceeds went to support the Brazos Valley Food Bank.

Coordinated by Barbara Childress, Business Coordinator/HR for Soil and Crop Sciences, the chili cook-off also offers a fellowship opportunity for department personnel.

Nine teams and individuals entered the contest to see whose concoction would be favored by this year’s panel of judges:

- Dana McMahon, Business Administrator for Soil and Crop Sciences;
- Sarah “Chancla” Quiroz, a member of the Brazos Valley Roller Derby team; and
- Sara Childress, Research Services Administrator for the Vice President of Research.

When the dust settled, we had a new champion and raised $503.75 for the food bank.

Dr. Nithya Rajan placed first, Dr. Russell and Jeannie Jessup claimed second, and third place went to Bison Chili, the team of Brian Hux and Aditi Pandey.
Visiting scholar joins the weed science team

By: Beth Ann Luedeker

Enelise Osco will be part of the Texas A&M University Department of Soil and Crop Sciences, specifically the weed science research program of Dr. Muthu Bagavathiannan, for the next seven months.

Osco, a Ph.D. student at the Universidade Estadual do Centro Oeste - Guarapuava/Paraná (Brazil), received a scholarship offered by the Brazilian government (the CAPES program) to conduct a portion of her dissertation research abroad.

Osco is studying the residual effect of herbicides on cover crops in cropping systems. She chose to come to Texas A&M in part due to the prestige of the Aggie weed science program.

“I did some research into different universities and their weed science programs, and Texas A&M really stood out to me,” Osco said.

She studied the residual effects of herbicides in wheat and soybean in Brazil, and is now complementing that with research on cover crops following cotton.

In this trial, the weed science team treated cotton plots with a variety of herbicides at different growth stages. In October, the plots were replanted with ten different cover crops typically used in cropping systems.

Throughout the growing season, Osco and the team will observe those crops for any injury or growth disruptions caused by the residual effects of those herbicides.

In addition to her research, Osco will audit Bagavathiannan’s weed science course during the spring semester.

Genome Editing Symposium 2019

Graduate students conducted the second Texas A&M Genome Editing Symposium, “Improving Consumer Markets: Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is”, October 2-3.

This year’s event featured a variety of topics including editing for disease resistance in pigs, plant transformation, intellectual property in genome editing, and an industry pipeline for genome editing.

Two Bayer travel scholars: Andrew Katz from Colorado State University and Jingwei Yu from UC Davis spoke to the attendees.

Texas A&M University students had the opportunity to share their research with a public audience at the “All in Flavor of GMOs” event held at Blackwater Draw. This 3 minute thesis style competition gave participants 3 minutes to share their definition of GMOs and how they impact society.

Holly Lane won that competition with Ammani Kyanam placing 2nd and Benjamin Thomas claiming 3rd.

In the Bayer poster contest, Samantha liams placed first, 2nd place was received by Ana Escocard, and 3rd place by Khushboo Rhastogi and Stephon Warren.
Aggie Corn Maze was success

For the first time in several years, the weather cooperated with the students building the Aggie Corn Maze. Seeds were not washed away by torrential rains and the drip tape allowed a beautiful crop to grow.

Likewise, the weekends in October were nearly all beautiful and the students were able for all but one Friday. They had more than 2,000 visitors and raised over $10,000.

“We use the money towards fall and spring SASES [Students of Agronomy, Soils, and Environmental Sciences] meetings as well as to create the next year’s maze,” said Agronomy Society President Morgan Sanders.

While the visitors all enjoyed the maze, not all reached the end. “We survived the Aggie Corn Maze!” said one visitor as he exited through the entrance. “We cannot say it was successfully navigated, but we survived!”

Happy to find the exit

Left: Student organizations were invited to set up booths near the corn maze which provided many fun games and activities for visitors.

Below: Factual information posted throughout the maze made it educational as well as fun.

Planting the maze in August

Below: Agronomy Society president Morgan Sanders helped one group find the right path through the maze, with a little help from a map!
November

9-15 - ASA, CSSA, SSSA meeting, San Antonio
12 - Soil and Crop Sciences Mixer at ASA - Hard Rock Cafe, San Antonio 5:30-7:30
15 - Lone Star Healthy Streams, Matagorda, TX  Contact: Matt Brown - matthew.brown@tamu.edu
19 - Texas Watershed Stewards, Georgetown, TX  Contact: Michael Kuitu - mkuitu@tamu.edu
19 - Texas Well Owner Network Well Educated training, Lincoln, TX  Contact: Joel Pigg - j-pigg@tamu.edu
28-29 - Thanksgiving holiday

December

3-5 - Amarillo Farm and Ranch Show, Amarillo, TX
4-5 - Texas state support
5 - Pesticide applicator course, Overton, TX
9-12 - American Seed Trade Association CSS (Corn,Sorghum, Soybean and Wheat), Chicago, IL
https://www.betterseed.org/events/asta-css-seed-expo/
10-11 - Texas Plant Protection Association annual conference, Bryan, TX  www.texasplantprotection.com
16 - Dr. Baltensperger’s Holiday Party - 6:00 p.m.  - location TBD  Faculty and staff invited
16-17 - Faculty Retreat - College Station
23-January 1, 2020 - Closed for the holidays

January 2020

8-10 - AgriLife Conference, College Station, TX
8-10 - Beltwide Cotton Conferences, Austin, TX
28-30 - National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board Mtg

Save the Date

February 6-7 - Soil Survey and Land Resource Workshop
March 2-4, 2020 - Biannual Plant Resistance to Insect Symposium at CIMMYT, Texcoco