Welcome back! Our campus and department are buzzing with life as students return to campus. Our department had a successful Welcome Day and Meet-n-Greet Lunch last week – the hallway was packed with people and lots of food and friendships were shared. Classes started this week and PSLA hosts our first weekly seminar today in YNG 132 that will feature new faculty, Prof. Jill Desimini and Dr. Cathryn Chapman. Be sure to arrive early for pizza and to meet with these new members of our department. We also want to remind you that the PSLA Ice Cream Social is coming up on Sept. 14th! Everyone in the college is invited and we will have ice cream, free PSLA t-shirts, and other goodies. Tell everyone! Finally, in terms of new hires and open positions, we are happy to announce PSLA's newest team member is in Floriculture! Ms. Madison Sajkowicz started on August 5 and we look forward to featuring her in more detail in our upcoming issue. We are also looking to expand our team and currently have an open faculty position for an Assistant Extension Educator in Fruit Production and Integrated Pest Management. This position will be extension and teaching focused and more details can be found online. Just type s.uconn.edu/fruit into your web browser to learn more. Finally, if you have some news to share with us, please don't be shy. Big or small, we want to share your success.

Sincerely,

Dennis Tsui
Christine Strand
Nicole Gabelman
Sydney Everhart
Faculty Feature Friday

Dr. Nicholas Goltz

Hometown: Navy brat, so I moved around a lot. Born in Virginia Beach, VA, lived in Harpswell, Maine for a while, then Florida. Pensacola, New Port Richey, Holiday, then Gainesville, where I lived for my last 10 years in Florida.

Favorite Color: Forest Green

Favorite Snack: Peanut Butter everything

What do you like to do in your free time? I just moved to Connecticut last year, so most of my free time recently has been spent working on home improvements. I enjoy spending time with my partner and pets, relaxing outdoors, cooking, reading and playing video games, caring for my many houseplants, and more recently getting into furniture restoration/repair.

What job/career did you envision when you were younger? I envisioned many different careers for myself when I was younger and would change my mind often about what would be a good fit for me. I think I wanted to be a veterinarian or doctor for a lot of my childhood, but I also remember not being committed to anything in particular. Looking back, I think most of the jobs focused on supporting my community. I like helping people and being social, so directing the UConn Plant Diagnostic Lab is a perfect fit for me.

Favorite project: So far, my favorite research project has been parasitoid biological control for controlling the Kudzu bug, Megacopta cribraria.

Favorite thing about plant science and/or landscape architecture: The collegial atmosphere and interest in collaboration.

Favorite plant: Plumeria spp. – Their flowers come in many different colors, smell great and are pollinated by sphinx moths at night. They’re very easy to propagate. My mom’s neighborhood has several of these plants. My siblings and I would go on walks after storms and collect broken branches that would inevitably be planted in our yard.

Dr. Nick Goltz joined the department in July 2021.
September Celebrations

CONGRATULATIONS

Ms. Yanjun Li in Dr. Yi Li's laboratory successfully completed her Ph.D. thesis defense on August 16, 2022. The title of her Ph.D. thesis is "Improving efficiencies of stable genetic transformation, transient expression and transgene-free genome editing of citrus". Citrus is an important horticultural crop worldwide. Dr. Yanjun Li's new and improved methods for stable genetic transformation, transient expression and transgene-free genome editing of citrus should facilitate functional characterizations of citrus genes and also development of new citrus cultivars.

Gang Ma is advised by Gerald Berkowitz and successfully passed defense of his dissertation entitled, "Delineating cell and tissue signaling cascades involved in plant perception of developmental cues and pathogen infection into altered plant and cell function." Congratulations, Dr. Ma!

Lauren Sands, advised by Gerald Berkowitz, successfully defended her thesis titled Studies of Cannabis Genes Impacting Growth, Pathogen Defense, and Hormone Regulation of Cannabinoid Synthesis. Post graduation, Lauren is moving to Westfield, Massachusetts to work as a Senior Laboratory Technician in a Cannabis Testing Facility.

SHARE YOUR NEWS

We welcome submissions of content for the newsletter at any time of the year and we will include it whenever possible. Send newsletter content to psla@uconn.edu

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

The following members of our department will celebrate a birthday in September. Please join us in wishing them a happy birthday!

• Carla Caballero Mejia
• Travis Clark
• Jill Desimini
• Gabrielle Grandstaff
• Karl Guillard
• Cristian Schulthess
Upcoming Events

PSLA Ice Cream Social – September 14th 2:00 – 4:00
Mark your calendar! This year we’re hosting a PSLA Ice Cream Social with the UConn Dairy Truck coming to our parking lot for an afternoon of ice cream, free PSLA t-shirts, and festivities for our department and all members of CAHNR to enjoy. You’re invited!

Weekly PSLA Seminar Series is every Friday from 12:15 – 1:15 in YNG 132, with food served @ 12:00 for attendees. Check out the upcoming seminars...

SEPTEMBER SEMINARS

September 2nd – Meet our new PSLA Faculty: Jill Desimini and Cathryn Chapman
Come meet our new PSLA Faculty in the first of this weekly seminar series.
Hosted by: Julia Smachylo

September 9th – Meet our PSLA Staff: Travis Clark, Hayden Amtower, Madison Sajkowicz, and Dennis Tsui. Come meet our new PSLA Staff this week that is hosted by: Sohyun Park

September 16th – "Landscape Planning for Mental Health" by Susan Masino of Trinity College and hosted by Sohyun Park

September 23rd – "Plant & Soil Microbes Interaction" by Rachel Hestrin of UMass Stockbridge School of Agriculture and hosted by Haiying Tao

September 30th – "Employing modern genetic techniques on an intractable pathosystem - Melampsora spp willow rust in upstate New York" by Chase Crowell and hosted by John Inguagiate

Other Fun Stuff

Podcast Recommendation:
Short Wave takes the phrase “you learn something new every day” to a whole new level. This daily science podcast is great if you like to expand the horizons of your knowledge to all realms of science. The host of the show includes two science communicators, Maddie and Sofia, who do a wonderful job guiding you through new and insightful findings, all with a good sense of humor along the way.

Plant Joke of the Month:
What's a tree's favorite soda? Root beer! 😊