

# HLA Happenings

Issue: 24-16  
April 26, 2024

## In This Issue

- [Retirement Celebration for Dr. Mike Dana](#)
- [Welcome Brittany Weerts!](#)
- [HLA Undergrads Attend College of Agriculture Awards Banquet](#)
- [Dr. Aaron Thompson Selected for 2024-2025 Insights Forum](#)
- [HLA Students at MANNRS Banquet](#)
- [HORT Club End of Semester Banquet](#)
- [Varala Lab Publishes Research in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences \(PNAS\)](#)
- [Sneak Peak: Purdue Freight Farms Are On Their Way!](#)
- [Purdue Boilermaker Vegetable Season Pass Is Back!](#)
- [Hydroponics for Everyone Workshop](#)
- [Purdue Hydroponics and Greenhouse Crop Production Webinar Series](#)
- [Purdue Small Farm Education Field Day](#)
- [Purdue Fruit and Vegetable Field Day](#)
- [Save the Date: Purdue Turf and Landscape Field Day](#)

Congratulations to Mike on his retirement and thank you for the many years of teaching and service to the department!

More photos from the celebration can be viewed in the [gallery](#).

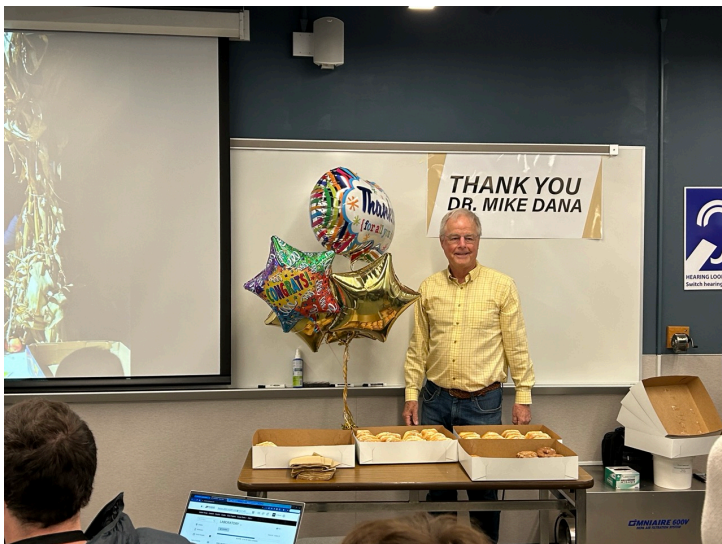
---

## Welcome Brittany Weerts!



**Brittany Weerts** has joined HLA as the new Hydroponic Research Operations Administrator. Her background is in commercial growing, with an emphasis on greenhouse and hydroponic production. For the last three years, she worked as the Head Grower for Eden Valley Farms, a hydroponic start-up in Francesville, Indiana, where they supplied major retail chains with fresh lettuce and herbs. Prior to that, she worked as a grower at Brehob Nurseries in Indianapolis. Brittany is a former graduate of HLA. She is excited to be back and is looking forward to using her skills to further hydroponics at Purdue.

## Retirement Celebration for Dr. Mike Dana



On Thursday, HLA faculty and staff surprised **Mike Dana** during his last day of teaching with a retirement celebration.

## HLA Undergrads Attend College of Agriculture Awards Banquet



L-R: Danielle Hewitt, Ella Pegg, Lauren Harmon, Faith Hartman

The College of Agriculture Awards Banquet was held on Monday night. **Danielle Hewitt** (Sophomore/LA), **Ella Pegg** (Freshman/SFS), **Lauren Harmon** (Junior/HORT), and **Faith Hartman** (Senior/SFS) were recognized as HLA's Outstanding Students (pictures left to right). We are very proud of all of their accomplishments!

## Dr. Aaron Thompson Selected for 2024-2025 Insights Forum



Congratulations to Dr. **Aaron Thompson**, who will join the 2024-2025 Insights Forum. Purdue Insights is a leadership forum hosted by Faculty Affairs in the Office of the Provost intended to support faculty who are interested in exploring leadership at a university, increase the pool of potential leaders at Purdue, and expand our capacity for leadership programming beyond the Big 10 Academic Alliance Academic Leadership Programs. The Insights program focuses on preparing and supporting faculty to take on

enhanced leadership roles at Purdue, particularly as Associate Head, Head, Associate Dean, or Center/Institute Director.

## HLA Students at MANNRS Banquet



L-R: Otto Hoehl, Dr. Linda Prokopy, Shivika Aggrawal, Spencer Logan

Last week, Dr. **Prokopy** attended the MANNRS (Minorities in Agricultural, Natural Resources and Related Sciences) Purdue Chapter annual banquet to celebrate the accomplishments of the Chapter (first place in the nation!) and celebrate our student members - **Otto Hoehl** (Turf Management and Science), **Spencer Logan** (Pre Landscape Architecture), **Shivika Aggrawal** (grad student). Shivika, co-advised by Dr. Prokopy and Dr. Thompson, won the Outstanding New Member Award. Congratulations!

## HORT Club End of Semester Banquet



The **Purdue Horticulture Society** held the end-of-the-semester dinner on April 24th at Walt's Pub. In addition to announcing new officers, thanking previous officers, and presenting **Hannah Beck** with the (newly named) Dr. Mike Dana Outstanding Member Award. The club presented long-time advisor, Dr. **Mike Dana**, a Purdue rain gauge and a pot with an inscription thanking him for his years of service. More photos from the dinner can be viewed in the [gallery](#).

## Varala Lab Publishes Research in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) Purdue team develops fast-track process for genetic improvement of plant traits

**Web-based tool for plant biologists to discover regulators for their trait-of-interest**

**Kranthi Varala**, and 9 co-authors from HLA, published the details of the new web-based regulatory gene discovery tool in the [Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences](#).

Varala has a patent pending on the results that relate to economically important seed oil biosynthesis. The research team, which includes two post-docs, three graduate students, and three undergraduate researchers from HLA, built a resource that learns from large amounts of publicly available data to quickly identify what transcription factors regulate a given trait-of-interest. The team used a computational method called the inference approach to predict what transcription factors were going to regulate the seed oil biosynthesis process in Arabidopsis. The approach found eight previously known and five new transcription factors that regulate seed oil, an unprecedented success rate for a prediction tool. The resource is now available to the broader plant community for gene discovery and validation, thanks to an intuitive web interface built by our very own data science expert, **Kirby Kalbaugh**.

Authors: Rajeev Ranjan, Sonali Srijan, Somaiah Balekuttira, Tina Agarwal, Melissa Ramey, Madison Dobbins, Rachel Kuhn, Xiaojin Wang, Karen Hudson, Ying Li and Kranthi Varala

This research was supported by the U.S. Department of Energy Office of Science.

## Sneak Peak: Purdue Freight Farms Are On Their Way!



Thanks to a generous donor, two freight farms that will be used for controlled environment demonstrations and research will soon hit the road to West Lafayette. They are scheduled to arrive Monday morning, April 28, at the

**Purdue Student Farm.** All are welcome to view their arrival. An official celebration will be scheduled at a later day.

## Purdue Boilermaker Vegetable Season Pass Is Back!



The **Purdue Boilermaker Vegetable Season Pass** is back for 2024!

Take a giant leap towards supporting the **Purdue Student Farm**. Sign up for the Boilermaker Vegetable Season Pass to get your box of Purdue-grown vegetables, herbs, and fruits! Once you have signed up, you have the option to pay by check or credit card. See the signup confirmation email for details.

There are two share purchase options for 2024: Weekly & biweekly. [Sign up today!](#)

## Hydroponics for Everyone Workshop



Hydroponics training is offered to everyone in May and June at Purdue University. Interested participants can choose either May or June session. There will be four classes for each session on Saturdays from 9am-4pm. Training will be provided at the state-of-the-art Purdue hydroponics facility located in the Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture, 625 Ag. Mall Drive, West Lafayette, IN 47907. Registration fees are \$300 per participant. Use the following

links to register:

May session [HYDROMAY | Purdue Ticket Office \(ticketmaster.com\)](#)

June session [HYDROJUN | Purdue Ticket Office \(ticketmaster.com\)](#)

Course Highlights

- o Taught by Purdue faculty \*
- o Extensive hands-on experience \*
- o Lunch included with free parking \*
- o Receive printed materials, plants, and seedlings \*
- o Limited number of participants per session \*

## Purdue Hydroponics and Greenhouse Crop Production Webinar Series

**Purdue Hydroponics and Greenhouse Crop Production Webinar Series (2024)**

Registration is free  
 Register here for all webinars: [https://purdue.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_e5UHHPj4UtdQ0QK](https://purdue.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_e5UHHPj4UtdQ0QK)

1. Nutrient Management in Recycling Hydroponic Systems (April 15, noon to 1 pm)
2. Temperature Management (Summer/ Winter) in Greenhouses (May 15, noon to 1 pm)
3. Organic Lettuce Production in Hydroponic Systems (June 12, noon to 1 pm)
4. How to Build an Indoor Hydroponic Production System for Homes and Schools (Aug 21, noon to 1 pm)
5. Fundamentals of Soilless Substrates for Floriculture Crop Production (Sep 18, noon to 1 pm)

Purdue Controlled Environment Agriculture Research & Extension

**Contacts for additional information**  
 Lori Jolly-Brown (765-494-1296;  
 ljollybr@purdue.edu)  
 Dr. Krishna Nemali (knemali@purdue.edu)



[Register](#) for the Purdue Hydroponics and Greenhouse Crop Production Webinar Series.

## Purdue Small Farm Education Field Day



**REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!**

**Attendees, exhibitors, and sponsors register here:** [Purdue Small Farm Education Field Day](#)

Please join us for the Purdue Small Farm Education Field Day

on July 25, 2024, at the Purdue Student Farm, 1491 Cherry Lane, West Lafayette, IN 47906. Registration starts at 8 a.m., and the educational tours will be from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. A food truck will be on site for lunch purchases.

The 2023 Purdue Small Farm Education Field Day was a huge success! This year's field day will again offer demonstration stations where you can interact with specialists and learn about a variety of topics: food safety updates, packhouse tours, weed and insect management, crop production, and more. As a bonus, all attendees will receive a FREE [Vegetable Crops Hotline](#) newsletter subscription and a FREE ice-cold treat from the Kona Ice truck, compliments of HLA and Purdue Extension.

## Purdue Fruit and Vegetable Field Day



*Purdue Fruit and Vegetable Field Day*

**REGISTRATION NOW OPEN**

**THURSDAY, JULY 18, 2024**  
Purdue Meigs Ag Center  
9101 S 100 E, Lafayette, IN 47909

**PURDUE UNIVERSITY** Extension

The banner features a collage of images: a hand holding a small green fruit, people working in a field, a yellow flower, a bunch of grapes, and a person operating a tractor.

**REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!**

**Register here:** [Purdue Fruit and Vegetable Field Day](#)

Please join us again this year for the Purdue Fruit & Vegetable Field Day, presented on July 18, 2024, at the Purdue Meigs Ag Center, 9101 S 100 E, Lafayette, IN 47909. Registration starts at 8 a.m., and educational tracks are

It is the policy of the Purdue University that all persons have equal opportunity and access to its educational programs, services, activities, and facilities without regard to race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin or ancestry, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, disability or status as a veteran. Purdue is an Affirmative Action Institution. This material may be available in alternative formats.

scheduled between 9 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. Lunch is included in registration.

The 2023 field day was a hit. It featured Purdue Extension's specialty crop research to 90 attendees, who left with positive feedback. Excited for 2024, the event promises interactive demonstrations on topics like weed and insect management, pollinators, soil health, apple orchard systems, bird control in vineyards, and more. As a bonus, all attendees will receive a free [Vegetable Crops Hotline](#) newsletter subscription! For more information about the field day, visit the [Purdue Fruit and Vegetable Field Day](#) web page.

## Save the Date: Purdue Turf and Landscape Field Day



**PURDUE TURF & LANDSCAPE FIELD DAY 2024**

**SAVE THE DATE**

**JULY 16, 2024**  
at the W. H. Daniel Turfgrass Research & Diagnostic Center  
<https://www.mrtf.org/event/turf-and-landscape-field-day>

PRESENTED BY:  
**PURDUE UNIVERSITY**  
**MRTF**  
Midwest Regional Turf Foundation

The banner features a photograph of a group of people gathered on a golf course green, with a large number '4' on a sign in the background.

### Newsletters:

Facts for Fancy Fruits: <https://fff.hort.purdue.edu>

Vegetable Crops Hotline: <https://vegcropshotline.org/>

Purdue Landscape

Report: <https://www.purduelandscapereport.org>

HLA Happenings © Purdue University - [www.purdue.edu/hla/sites/hla-happenings](http://www.purdue.edu/hla/sites/hla-happenings)

Editor: Pamela J Fisher | Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture, 625 Agriculture Mall Dr., West Lafayette, IN 47907