



Turf Bowl competition is more than watching grass grow

Students in New Mexico State University’s burgeoning Turfgrass Science and Management program competed Feb. 23 in the Collegiate Turf Bowl in Anaheim, Calif. They were the first NMSU students ever to compete in the event.

Sponsored by the Golf Course Superintendents of America Association, 81 teams from universities across the nation competed in the event, which was held in tandem with the association’s annual meeting.

“I am very proud of the students. They did very well for their first time in competition and gained experience that will help them compete next year,” said Ryan Goss, coach.

Students (from left to right) Roy Johnson, of Silver City, N.M., Brett Thornsbury, of Clovis, N.M., and Matt Alcalá and Jason Tomko, both of Farmington, N.M., identified plant, weed and insect species at the competition, along with solving business-related problems in the field of turfgrass management, such as budget and employee situations.

The students, also part of NMSU’s turf club, set up an informational booth at the association meeting.

Goss said the students met twice a week to study in preparation for the competition. The students plan to do a significant amount of fundraising to finance next year’s trip to compete, including hosting a golf tournament in the fall.

“This was a great opportunity for the students. In addition to competing, they got to meet with people in the industry, hand out resumes and go through informal interviews,” Goss said.

Goss plans to coach a Turf Bowl team next year, and anyone who is interested in more information should contact him at **(505) 646-3297**.

In this issue....

Turf Bowl.....	1
Floral Judging team.....	2
Dr. Baltensperger.....	3
Back to the 70’s.....	3
Alumni Notes.....	4-5
A Collectors Item.....	6

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NMSU students compete in national floral judging and design contest

Eight New Mexico State University students created floral design pieces and judged the merits of flowers and potted plants March 29-30 as part of the 66th annual national Inter-Collegiate Floral Judging and Design Competition to be held at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Okla.

This year was the tenth anniversary of the Floral team competing under the tutelage of Dr. Geno Picchioni, and assistant coach Sabine Green. Oklahoma hosted our first competition back in 1998, with a small and humble team of 4 students and one coach. This year, we traveled back to Stillwater with 8 contestants, and three coaches. . A bit about the national Pi Alpha Xi competition: The contest is broken into two distinct categories: judging and design. Four of the students participated in the judging contest (three competed with one alternate) and four participated in the design contest.

The judging team members were Jessica Corrie, Margaret Kovar, Amber Martin and alternate Jennifer Hopper. The design team consisted of Jaclyn Simon, Monica Gomez, Victoria Arroyave and Kelsi Cureton. The team was coached by Green, program coordinator of the Floriculture Program in Plant and Environmental Sciences Dept., with the help of assistant coaches Dean Goodman (judging) and Jessica Lucero (design).



Back, left to right: Kelsi Cureton, Amber Martin, Jessica Lucero, Jaclyn Simon, Monica Gomez, Margaret Kovar, Jessie Corrie, Victoria Arroyave
Front: Jennifer Hopper and Sabine Green (coach)

The judging competition consisted of several classes of four examples of potted plants or cut flowers. Participants were not allowed to touch the classes, and have three minutes to rank the specimens according to different characteristics (e.g. shape, color or size, disease, insect or mechanical damage). Margaret Kovar placed 8th high individual overall, out of 24 contestants.

The second half of the competition was the design portion, with four categories: two amateur and two professional. A professional designer is one that has worked in the floral design industry as a paid designer. Once you have competed in a category, you may never compete in that category again! During the design contest, the designers have one hour to create an original, unique floral design using flowers provided and adhering to a specified design category.

This year, the amateur participants created a centerpiece and an asymmetrical triangle. The professional participants created a tablescape and a bridal bouquet in a holder. Many of the students spent the entire year preparing for the competition, but practice for the design team paid off this year, as Kelsi Cureton placed first in the amateur division for table centerpiece. Victoria Arroyave placed 4th in the amateur asymmetrical triangle division, Jaclyn Simon placed 4th in the professional tablescape division, and Monica Gomez placed 4th in professional wedding bouquet category.

The students hold a weekly flower sale. In addition to being an opportunity to hone students' design skills, proceeds from the sale go toward practice materials and funding the team's annual trip to competition. Additional funds for the trip come from the plant and environmental sciences department and private donors.

Anyone interested in more information on the Intercollegiate Floral Judging and Design Team can contact Green at (505) 646-3405 or swhitley@nmsu.edu.

New Mexico State Emeritus Professor Receives Turfgrass Science Award

Dr. Arden Baltensperger received the 2006 Fred V. Grau Turfgrass Science Award presented at the Crop Science Society of America (SSSA) on Nov. 12-16 in Indianapolis, IN.



The Fred V. Grau Turfgrass Science Award recognizes significant career contributions in turfgrass science. In 2005, the Southwest Turfgrass Association established the Arden Baltensperger Lifetime Achievement Award in his honor. He recently received the Breeders Cup from the Turfgrass Breeders Association for the development of Princess 77.

“It’s great to receive this career award for our turfgrass research and development,” Dr. Baltensperger said. “I’m indebted to many students and especially graduate students who contributed so much to our plant breeding and variety development program (in the 1980s and 1990s). I think this reflects well on NMSU.”

“This university has been so good to our family – my wife, Elsie, and I and our four children,” Baltensperger said. “All four of our children and one grandchild have attended or are attending here.”

Arden and Elsie have also been good to the University, having established the Arden and Elsie Baltensperger Scholarship for students interested in turf and plant breeding.

Back to the 70’s.....1972

Looking Back in Time: The “Have Sharpshooter Will Travel” gang (from left to right: Larry Teuber, Bill Broderson, Mike Weber, and Barry Williams) with their new coach (Bruce Buchanan far right), took fourth in the Regional Soils Contest in 1972 at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah and hosted the 1973 soils contest. Some of the “travel” included a two day visit to the Safford Experimental Station in Arizona and a day tour of the Lincoln National Forest.



"Worship of nature may be ancient, but seeing nature as cuddlesome, hug-a-bear and too cute for words is strictly a modern fashion." P.J. O'Rourke

Alumni Notes...

Thanks to Tom Wootten!

Reading about Tom Wootten and his adventures with native plants in the winter issue of the Alumni Newsletter brought back great memories of my time at NMSU. I remember climbing into a van with Dr. Cotter (always an adventure when he was behind the wheel) and heading out I-70 to visit this nursery that was truly different. What I remember most was the unusual plant selection and the volunteer *Penstemon*, and *Baileya* poking out between the nursery cans. This nursery operation looked more like a garden than a nursery. To this day I still instruct my employees not to cut down my favorite wild flowers at job sites or in non production areas.

In graduate school (1990) the primary theme of my research was water conserving landscape plants and currently my company Casa Blanca Horticultural Services INC in Tucson Arizona thrives on this valid practice of using plants like the ones Tom introduced me to as an undergraduate (1987). The article suggests that Tom may have started a little early with his Nursery and that water conservation was not on the minds of the home owners at the time. It is true that Dry Country Plants did not become The Mountain States Nursery of New Mexico but great seeds were planted and from where I stand Tom's nursery and work were timed perfectly.

My thanks go out to Tom Wootten and all that he did in influencing me in the area of native plants, the only way to garden. (Oh, on the subject of native plants, I named my youngest after my favorite wild flower *Baileya*)

Marcus G. White(B.S. in Agro 1988, M.S. in Hort 1990)

Bob Horton



Bob Horton (Ph.D. 1981), professor of Agronomy, was named a C.E. Curtiss Distinguished Professor in Agriculture in 2006, is the highest academic honor bestowed by Iowa State University. It recognizes faculty members for exemplary performance in the last two of the following areas: teaching and advising; research, scholarship, or artistic creativity; and extension, university service, or professional practice.

Horton has developed a renowned soil physics research and teaching program at ISU, earning international recognition and garnering him the 2001 Soil Science Research Award and the 2002 Don and Betty Kirkham Award, given to the top soil scientists in the world. He has been a member of the ISU Agronomy Department for 25 years.

Horton said the most enjoyable part of his job is working with graduate students. "I marvel at being paid to have the opportunity to encourage and observe

scientific and personal growth in my graduate students. I feel blessed to have worked with so many outstanding students through the years." He claims the students deserve the lion's share of credit for his scientific accomplishments.

In Alaska....

Victoria Anne (M.S. Spring 2005) has been with the USFS in Alaska since completing her M.S. She conducts slope stability analysis for new road construction and timber harvests with the Forest Service in Petersburg, AK. She will be relocating to Ft. Collins, CO in June to work with fuel management and watershed restoration projects on the Canyon Lakes Ranger District.



Alumnus to receive Masters...

Michael Ryan Work (B.S. in Agriculture with a Major in Horticulture, Spring 2003) will receive his MLA from Texas A&M University this semester.

While at NMSU Michael Ryan designed the water feature and medicinal plants gardens in the Landscape Demonstration Garden.

Congratulations!

In memory of Sandra Lee Smith Crout

July 26, 1948 - December 17, 2006

SANDRA L. CROUT (B.S.'85), beloved mother, sister and aunt passed away on December 17, 2006. She is



survived by her daughter, Lisa C. Kourey, her sister, Glenda Hawthorne, and her niece, Amy McMasters. Sandy grew up in central El Paso, and her love of nature was inspired early on by the family camping trips. She was enthralled by the beauty and intricacy of the creation, and she always took time to smell the flowers. She had a math and scientific mind, and at one point, toyed with the idea of becoming a mathematician. And yet, she was so much an artist, especially with her floral design creations.

It had always bothered her that she hadn't finished college so, after her father passed away in late 1981, she made the bold decision to go back to school. She sold everything, including her house, to get the money to go to New Mexico State University to study horticulture. She excelled

in all her classes and was named a Crimson Scholar and made the Dean's list. Graduation with high honors came in 1985. She entered the Master's program immediately following graduation, and for the next two years, she did research on pecan photosynthesis.

After being involved with the Master Gardener and County Extension programs, Sandra's career in education began in 1989 in Socorro ISD. She was so petrified on her first day in the classroom that she cried! During those first years at Socorro High School, she taught Agriculture and Landscape Design. With her students, many of whom were "special needs kids", she grew vegetable gardens. They tilled the soil, planted the seeds and watered the garden together. When the harvest came in, they cooked the vegetables and had a feast on Fridays. Most of her students had never tasted zucchini squash before, but they loved it and couldn't wait 'til the following Friday!

In 1990, she had to get her teaching certification or lose her job. Once again, she found herself in an "all or nothing" situation, so for the next two summers, she packed her bags and headed for Texas Tech in Lubbock to take the necessary courses. She had been terrified of genetics and advanced chemistry, but she wound up acing both of them, and received her certification.

Her vocational program moved to Montwood High School around 1994, where she developed it into the only program of it's kind in the State of Texas, an actual working flower shop at the campus. She named it 'Awesome Blossoms'. Her students learned the principals of floral design and produced arrangements they would sell every Friday to the faculty and students. The employees of SISD could order flowers at reasonable prices. The profits were reinvested into this successful program.

How many students does a teacher influence? Over the course of 16 years, it's approximately 2000 directly through her classes. Indirectly, it's thousands... Sandra always gave her students the best of herself by being prepared and on time for class. And she taught them more than just floral design. She taught them about setting goals, accepting challenges, overcoming fears, and taking risks in order to go after what you want in life. She was a great teacher.

Note: this was excerpted from the memorial website

<<http://web.mac.com/ghawtho1/iWeb/Site/Sandra%27s%20Memorial.html>> prepared by her sister, Glenda Hawthorne.

Alumni Info. Form

Alumni Name: _____
Spouse Name: _____
Address: _____
Children/Ages _____
E-mail address _____

Return Address:
John Mexal, NMSU
jmexal@nmsu.edu
PES Dept.
MSC 3Q, Box 30003
Las Cruces, NM 88003

Year Graduated: _____

Yes, I want to support the ___ Bruce Erhard Endowment ___ Debbie Widger Endowment ___ Mary F. Mexal Endowment
I have enclosed: ___ \$20, ___ \$40, ___ \$75 ___ other.

Please make checks payable to: **NMSU Foundation** & specify scholarship name on check

Brief paragraph on recent events in your life: professional or personal (feel free to include a recent photo):

Visit us on the web at <http://cahe.nmsu.edu/pes> and view the color version of the newsletter.

A Collector's Item...

Save this newsletter--it is the last of its kind. Unfortunately, with the cost of paper and printing, an 8 page, four color newsletter costs nearly \$2,000 to produce and another \$400 to mail to our alumni and friends. We have mailed B&W newsletters and posted the color version on the department website < <http://cahe.nmsu.edu/pes> >to keep costs under control. Unfortunately, costs keep increasing, but our budget is shrinking. What started 12 years ago as a no frills, not-quite-mimeographed newsletter has become a semi-slick, important venue for communicating with our alumni and friends. To continue, we will need to make a few changes. In the future, the PES Alumni Newsletter will be 'electronic', and we will use 'snail mail' and email (give us your address above) to notify recipients when the next newsletter is posted to the department's website. For those who prefer a paper copy, if you let us know--by return mail, e-mail, phone, smoke signals-- we will still mail a paper copy to you. We think this will (unless everyone requests a mailed copy) reduce the time it takes to put the newsletter 'to bed'.

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