

newsletter



cucurbits

cucurbits: plants in the gourd family such as
cucumbers, squash, pumpkins or melons

*spring * 2010*

Horticulture Center
of ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

To all of us who are associated with the Center there is one driving force that unites us in commonality. That force is passion, for growing plants, for learning new things, for building original projects, and for creating novel things. If you came to the Center last year you have seen some of Grant Walsh's passion.

GRANT IS FINISHING UP THIS YEAR AT ISU IN THE FINE ARTS DEPARTMENT. He will have a double major in photography and graphic design. He is a shining example of how a student can use the Center to foster and complement their classes. Grant took an independent study to work at the Center during the spring of 2009. He wanted to make sculptures, some with natural materials, and then incorporate them into the landscape. He spent the spring researching, constructing, deconstructing and eventually creating four pieces titled, *Alternate Landscapes*.

People identified his first piece by many different names. It was called a worm to some, an intestine or an octopus to others. The piece was a twisted coil made from chicken wire tubes wrapped in natural materials such as straw and pinecones. It was centered at the top of the entrance to the gardens between two evergreens. Through the center of the coil was a soaker hose and intermittently throughout the coil he had annuals or herbs planted in it. At the base of the 20 foot coil was a bed of herbs including parsley and pansies. It was the most popular sculpture at the Center. Visitors often asked more questions about that sculpture than anything else at the Center.

The second piece consisted of several structures that I called the *Dancing Trees*. Grant was diligent with getting the eight to ten foot branches to arch and then unite together at the top, forming arches that the young ones could run through.

The third piece got much attention from the golfers who would wander over to the fence to look at the garden that contained the *Sunbathers*. Five body casts (minus the heads) of Grant's buddies posed as if basking in the sun.

The last piece was more subtle, a great project for any homeowner looking for a natural screen in their yards. The screen was made of wood ring slices that were spaced out and strung together to form a curtain hung that from the trees.

The last piece was more subtle, a great project for any homeowner looking for a natural screen in their yards. The screen was made of wood ring slices that were spaced out and strung together to form a curtain hung from the trees.

The structures added a new perspective to the gardens, allowing the Center to show its feisty side. It is a great gift that Grant gave to the Center, for now we understand the power of art in the garden, and specifically for sculptures in the garden. So it is no surprise that this year's theme for the Center will be Sculptures in the Garden. We will be celebrating by installing a series of sculptures throughout the season. As one of the artist's who will be presenting at the Center, Grant will again be constructing a playful series, consisting of four sculptures, drawing upon prevalent environmental concerns in order to foster awareness. We are excited about the series and hope that as you plan your events throughout the year that you will be able to come and celebrate the newest additions.

horticulture center director
Jessica Chambers



AUTUMNAL FESTIVAL



It has to happen some time. You can cross your fingers, or perhaps say a little prayer but in the end, it just comes down to the basic law of averages. After two years of perfect fall days, 60s with sun and blue sky, and one year of 90 degrees with hot and humid weather, 2009 was finally the year we got our cold and wet weather for the Autumnal Festival.

text by Jessica Chambers

The days that led up to the event were also cold and wet. We knew the bad weather was coming but by then the Center has so much invested in the event that the festival must go on. Months of caring for cucurbits, planning and organizing events and making scarecrows are just some of the preparations that go on.

Despite the cold misty weather the Center's volunteers and students came the day before to set up the displays. They returned the next day to man the popcorn and coffee machines, donned the pumpkin and scarecrow costumes, drove the wagon through the mud that had children sitting on wet straw bales and sold slippery gourds and pumpkins to attendees. All the exhibitors came as well, setting up their displays with their fun fall activities. Susan Waltrip even whipped up some pumpkin chili and stir fry in the misty weather.



There were additional glitches. The tent people put the “big circus tent” in the wrong place – right in the middle of the Growmark Turf Research plots. Early that morning the turbine blew its fuse and we could not pop the popcorn or percolate the coffee until Kevin Wiand brought his generator.

But the most surprising part was that despite the weather people still came. Perhaps this was their one chance to experience a “fall festival” or maybe they just came to support the Center. Parents and kids alike got muddy in the corn maze; they bought hot dogs and caramel apples, and bid on wet scarecrows.

By the end of the day volunteers, staff, students, exhibitors and attendees came together to celebrate autumn and to support the Center regardless of the weather -a successful festival by any standard.









The most annoying visitor could have been the Japanese beetles but instead, it was “rain,” sippy weather that hampered work in the gardens and doused visitors during the Autumnal Festival. Contending for “favorite spots” was the picnic table under the pines and the bench in the volunteer garden at sunset.

Jessica wrapped up the season perfectly when she named the “most gosh darn perfect moment,” which could have been the arbor raising, pumpkin planting or watching a full moon set over the trees. Instead, she declared it “May 19-Oct. 3.”

At the end of the night, the Hort Center director was surprised by “wittiest individual” Kent Seymour, who showered her with a collection of umbrellas donated from volunteers as a symbol of the soggy season. Kent thanked her for always being there for the volunteers, for thanking them each time they leave the gardens, for arranging inspiring field trips and remembering birthdays.

As she pulled the umbrellas out of a box, she said, “You know what’s going to happen now. It’s never going to rain.”

But when it does, she’ll be covered, thanks to her volunteers.

VOLUNTEER NIGHT

text by Kate Arthur

THIS WINE BOTTLE HELD A VERY SPECIAL VINTAGE.

It was delivered as an invitation to celebrate another season of volunteers at the Hort Center. The label asked volunteers to gather for a dinner in their honor at the Mackinaw Valley Vineyard. And gather they did, walking into the warm tasting room of Paul and Diane Hahn’s family vineyard. There were no rakes, shovels or gardening gloves, nothing more back breaking than lifting a glass and cracking a smile over a season of memories.

Volunteers submitted nominations for this year’s awards but there was no podium, no lengthy speeches or polite applause. Just laughter as Jessica Chambers announced the winners in categories that included “most sassy,” “cleanest,” “messiest,” and “wittiest.” There were other nominations, including the best (and worst) animal encounters, the most annoying visitors and the funniest moment (an e-mail Jessica sent to volunteers with a misspelling, asking if anyone had ever “pooped sorghum”).

When it came to the most dangerous moment, it wasn’t cleaning out the thistle patch but finding a nest of snakes in the mulch pile. Anyone who arrived to scoop mulch that night won’t forget the discovery of a tangle of thin, black snakes that wiggled off the end of rakes as volunteers persevered.

All Volunteers

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO SAVOR THE SUCCESS OF THE SEASON. IN THE RICH, ROLLING HILLS OF TAZEWELL COUNTY, JOIN YOUR FELLOW VOLUNTEERS FOR AN EVENING OF CELEBRATION AT THE MACKINAW VALLEY VINEYARD.

* THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12TH 2009.
SOCIAL HOUR WITH WINE TASTING AND APPETIZERS BEGINS AT 6:00PM. DINNER WILL FOLLOW AT 7:00.

ALSO, TOUR THE VINEYARD AND SEE THE WINE MAKING PROCESS.

WWW.MACKINAWVALLEYVINEYARD.COM

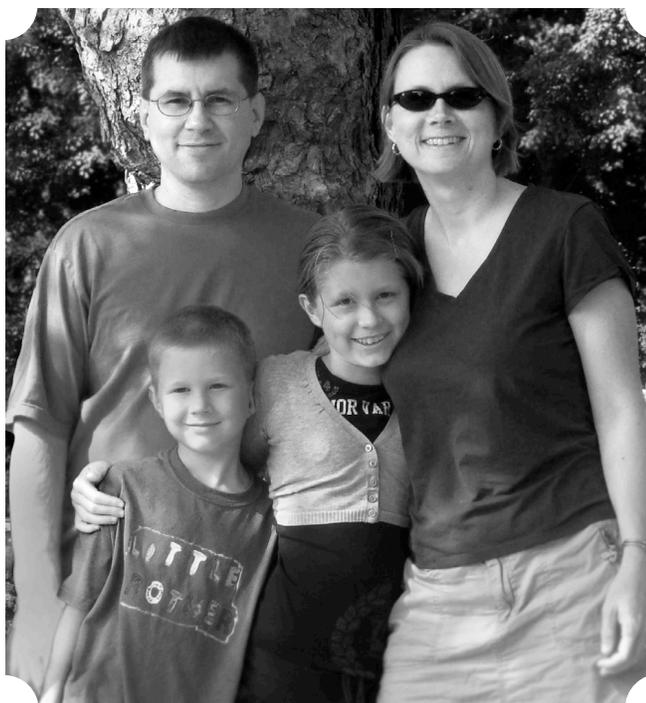
A REPLY IS REQUESTED: JESSICA 430-3406

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

the tulley family

I REMEMBER MY FIRST TRIP TO THE HORTICULTURE CENTER. It was a lovely mid-Summer day three years ago. My children and I were on a bicycle ride on the new leg of the Constitution Trail that runs along the far east end of the Horticulture Center. We had been meaning to actually stop-by, but hadn't yet made the time. So we pumped our bikes up the incline like we were on a trek up Mt. Everest, not knowing what we'd find at the crest. We parked our bikes at the nearest tree and set off on foot. At that time, we explored the 1857 Garden reading all the tags and noticing how much taller and fruitful the plants were compared to our puny backyard shade ridden garden. We talked about the heirloom vegetables and the historical connection of ISU to 1857. Then we marveled at the LOADS of green pepper plants in one plot. We couldn't imagine why there would be SO MANY peppers! Finally, we ventured to what we still consider the coup de gras of the Horticulture Center -- the Children's Garden. Back then, the metal sculptures had just been installed, and there was a wonderful chair fit for a queen among verdant green and smiling sunflowers. We explored to our hearts content pretending we were living in this new land of bountiful Earthen splendor. That's when we met Jessica. She and her student assistant were welcoming. She told us a little about the Center and how it's run with a few volunteers. She was so incredibly welcoming to us, despite the fact that we interrupted the weed pulling and watering they were doing. We returned that summer just two more times. Once with a camera in hand to capture the mystique of the Children's Garden and a second time to share what we saw with my husband. I believe the magic we experienced our very first day and the graciousness shown by Jessica Chambers was the impetus for our continued attraction to the HC.

It wasn't until the next spring that I 'officially' signed-up to volunteer. They broke me in slowly with easy tasks like planting miniscule seeds that were so small, I literally had to wet the end of my finger to be able to pick them up. Then they put power tools in my hands. Surely they had no idea about my lack of experience and lack of grace! The fact of the matter is, volunteering at the Hort. Center does not require a great deal know-how and skill about gardening or power tools. Jessica and the other volunteers are there to guide and give confidence to the less experienced.



One of the many beauties of the Center is the opportunity for my entire family to be involved. Initially, my husband John provided words of encouragement knowing I so desperately wanted to dig-in to community service, both literally and figuratively. Honestly, I think he relished the idea of me taking our then six- and eight-year old children for a few hours. More often than not, their 'volunteering' consists of running with wild abandoned with their Horticulture Center friends, or harvesting the fruits of our labor, such as strawberries or cucurbits. The original arbor raising is what brought out John the first time. Jessica recommended we invite our family and friends to lend a helping hand to build the arbor in an evening. I convinced John his strong back would be a huge asset to the event. Little did he know that this was his first of many times he would lend a hand while enjoying the camaraderie of the Hort Center crew.

It was never my intention to set out to find a 'volunteering' experience for our entire family. The kids and I were just seeing what adventures we could find on a bike ride. We have had the good fortune for this adventure to continue for years - three to be exact. While we volunteer at the HC, we can rest assured knowing that the children are in the good hands of Mother Nature making their evening bath well worthwhile. In so doing, I am able to commune with nature, not to mention the dedicated group of volunteers, graduate assistants, student workers and children to return week after week to make the Horticulture Center what it is today. As the poet Alfred Billings Street wrote, "Nature is man's teacher. She unfolds her treasures to his search, unseals his eye, illumines his mind, and purifies his heart; an influence breathes from all the sights and sounds of her existence." Personally I cannot replicate the peaceful feeling that exists when I am at the HC. It is through this shared natural experience my family is taught life lessons that they can pass on to generations ahead.

PASSIONATE CONTRIBUTORS

text by Jessica Chambers

PASSION IS NOT ALWAYS A COMPONENT IN AN INDIVIDUAL'S LIFE. Many people go through their lives without finding the spark, or that something that moves them. But in the case of Nick Pershey and Jonathan Damery that spark emanates from both of them.

Nick's passion is conifers. Nick initially learned about conifers from reading books on the topic. When he attended Joliet Junior College Nick furthered his interest while doing an internship at Rich's Fox Willow Pines, a nursery specializing in unique evergreens. While at ISU Nick was a part of the Horticulture Club and he took many classes in horticulture and business. On weekends he went home to help his mother take care of their 20 acre farm. He also played the piano for his church on Sunday mornings. Sadly, Nick lost his father when he was 10 but he has turned that loss into empowering attributes. He has a strong work ethic, a sense of commitment, a generous heart and a good sense of humor.

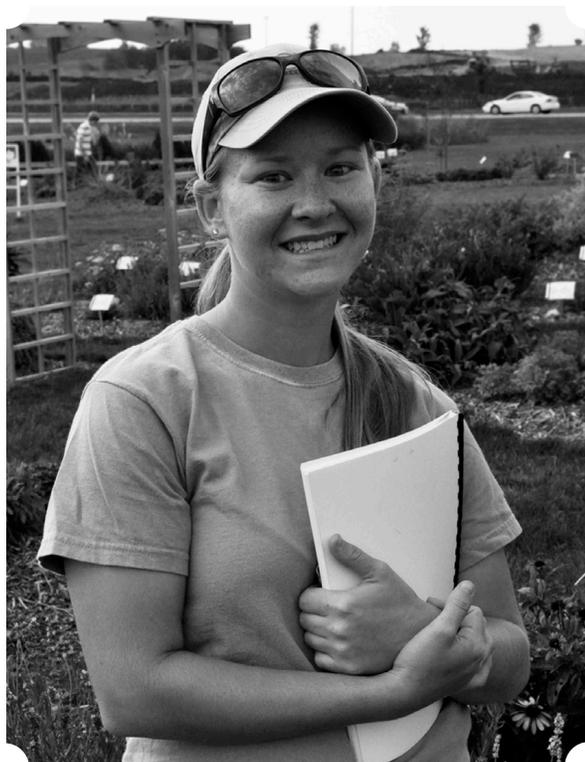
During Nick's senior year he entered an entrepreneurship competition that showcased his future plans of developing the family farm into a business. The competition was held within the College of Business. Nick beat out all the business majors by taking first place. Nick also took first place in the Woody Plant Identification competition during the PLANET Student Career Days in Pomona, California, beating out of over 100 students from 59 universities. Last spring he researched, designed, marketed and installed a Pinetum, a collection of conifers, at the ISU Horticulture Center. And he ended the year with the Holbert Award, the Department of Agriculture's most prestigious award given to a student.

Jonathan has a passion for all plants but he seems to have a special fondness for taxonomy. He has four older siblings all of which have gone to ISU. He came to ISU as a Presidential Scholar. Throughout the last three years he has received many accolades from his professors. He has shown that he is diligent with his work and always performs well in his exams and projects. Jonathan sees the smallest details, the hairs or thorns on a plant, while at the same time seeing the larger picture, such as the natural flow or repetition in a native landscape.

During his junior year Jonathan served as President of the ISU Horticulture Club. He volunteered throughout the school year at Funk's Grove on a community service project. He also entered the Woody Plant Identification competition at PLANET and took 15th place. Jonathan worked at the ISU Horticulture Center where he did everything from making scarecrows, revamping the Children's Garden with a new design, watering trees in subzero weather and he even wrote a column in the Center's newsletter entitled jon's tidbits. In actuality he is a jack-of-all-trades. He sealed his junior year with the final prize. He was a Bone Scholar recipient. And this year he concluded his term at ISU by receiving the Holbert award.

It is fitting that these two young men have become good friends. As Nick continues with his Masters at Michigan and Jonathan goes back to the Arnold Arboretum for a 6 month fellowship, it is sad to see them leave and it is hard to let them go. But all of us who have come to know Jonathan and Nick feel lucky to have been a part of their time here at ISU. We expect as they continue on their way that their passion will lead them, and undoubtedly, the horticultural world will be changed.





A FINAL GOODBYE

text by Jenna Rozum

IT ALL BEGAN QUITE SIMPLY.

Walking in the first day I could have never imagined I would have stayed so long, but this place is the reason I did. Now I can't imagine leaving, nor do I want to.

Herbaceous plants was the class, and after introducing herself and following the typical syllabus overview, Jessica Chambers, went on to tell the class about the Horticulture Center. Though fuzzy on some of the details, what I do vividly remember was the enthusiasm and sincerity with which she spoke. She said that she would be happy to take any help or ideas for student projects, as back then she had 10 acres, few resources, and even fewer helping hands.

I sat there thinking I have to help and become involved in whatever way I could. I was at the time a transfer student and not knowing much else about the others around me, I thought there would be a line of students at her desk after class ready and willing to take her up on her offer...there was not. To this day I still cannot believe I was the only one who approached her, saying simply, "I want to help." Had others had the ability to portend what great things could come from such a simple statement, maybe they would have said it as well.

From that day forward I was hooked and every opportunity I could have ever imagined was given to me.

An honors project designing perennial beds, a summer job watering, weeding, and planting, an assistantship as a graduate student researching and designing. These are just a small fraction of the opportunities and experiences I was allowed to partake in because of this wonderful place and they have without a doubt shaped the student I was and person I am today.

Perhaps the greatest part of being involved in the Horticulture Center is that I, as well as the other students and volunteers, have always been encouraged and our ideas welcomed with enthusiasm. Jessica is open to any idea no matter what it is or who it comes from. It is this remarkable characteristic in her that makes me feel as though I have left a real and profound mark on this place. When I began it was still a cornfield and to have seen and been a part of its amazing transformation has been the greatest part of my time here.

Jessica is a truly remarkable, passionate, and encouraging woman. I believe it takes a special kind of person to work with her and be a part of the Horticulture Center. This is exhibited in everyone who works there and all of the wonderful volunteers - they see and share the same passion and have truly made the Horticulture Center a part of who they are. Not only is everyone extremely dedicated, but while spending countless summer (not to mention October) hours with them they have the ability to make such hard work an incredibly wonderful and joyful experience. They too are some of the most important people in my life and I thank them for what they have made this experience for me.

I have since graduated, moved away, and started my first 'real' job. My time here is up, so to speak. Although I cannot be at the Horticulture Center in a physical sense, my heart and soul forever will be. Without the Horticulture Center, I would not be who or where I am today. The Horticulture Center has without a doubt guided my education and my new career pursuits. I am so happy for the profound way that it has touched my life and the lives of my family members. They too see the specialness of this place. From the bottom of my heart I say thank you to everyone I have had the pleasure of working with and getting to know through the Horticulture Center. I can only hope that someday I will be back for good and once again help to continue its stunning transformation.

A fitting ending to this article is likewise the concluding thought in the acknowledgements of my thesis. I feel these words apply here as well and they read...

Finally, I would like to thank Mrs. Jessica Chambers, to whom words cannot express my gratitude.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

2010

june 23

CHILDREN'S GARDEN PARTY-SCULPTURES IN THE GARDEN

Come help plant the Children's Garden, work on garden crafts, participate in creating a woven sculpture for the garden and enjoy refreshments. Make sure to wear your gardening clothes!

5:30-7:30 pm

july 4

THE 4th AT THE HORT

A private Independence Celebration for Friends of the Center, Volunteers and Staff

sept 9

SCULPTURES IN THE GARDEN, AN EVENING AFFAIR

Enjoy an evening in the gardens. View the newest sculptures and meet the sculptors who created them. Learn about earth friendly gardening!

5:00 - 7:00pm

oct 2

AUTUMNAL FESTIVAL

Come and celebrate autumn with your family at our annual Autumnal Festival. Enjoy family activities, purchase your pumpkins and gourds, get lost in our corn maze and pick out your favorite scarecrow.

8:00 - 4:00pm

nov 17

HEALTHY YOU, HEALTHY EARTH

ISU's annual wellness and environmental fair. The goal of the event is to highlight the seven dimensions of wellness, to share information, provide resources, and educate those in attendance about healthy lifestyles and environmental stewardship.

10:00 - 3:00pm Ballroom, Bone Student Center

The Center will have an information booth and exhibit

nov 12

VOLUNTEER CELEBRATION

A private celebration for Volunteers and Staff

Zucchini & Pasta with Curry Cashew Sauce

Susan Waltrip

INGREDIENTS

- 3 cloves minced garlic
- 1 medium yellow pepper sliced
- 1 medium orange pepper sliced
- 1 medium zucchini chopped
- 1 medium summer squash sliced
- 1 cup vegetable stock
- 1 cup cashews
- 1 inch fresh ginger, peeled and minced
- 1 tablespoon curry powder
- ½ teaspoon crushed red peppers (optional)
- 1 bunch fresh basil chopped
- Olive Oil
- Fresh lime juice
- Pure sesame seed oil
- Whole Grain Linguine
- Salt

DIRECTIONS

Prepare linguine as instructed on package
Heat olive oil in a pan, sauté garlic. Add sliced peppers, zucchini sticks, sliced summer squash and vegetable stock.

Simmer a couple minutes then add cooked pasta, cashews, curry, crushed red peppers, ginger, juice from half of a lime, chiffonade of basil, a few shakes of sesame oil and salt to taste. Blend all ingredients simmering 3-5 minutes then serve.

Makes 8, 1 cup servings

newsletter design by GRANT WALSH

YOUR SUPPORT IS ESSENTIAL TO
 THE HORTICULTURE CENTER'S
 GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT.
 WITH YOUR HELP THE CENTER
 CAN CONTINUE TO PROVIDE
 HIGH-QUALITY LEARNING,
 RESEARCH AND FACILITIES TO
 STUDENTS AND THE COMMUNITY.

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 Dave Gentry - Growmark
 Annette Hancock
 ISU Horticulture Club
 Dave Kennell
 Betty Kinser
 Linda Klawitter

THE ISU HORTICULTURE CENTER WOULD LIKE TO THANK YOU OUR VOLUNTEERS, FRIENDS & DONORS FOR A SUCCESSFUL SEASON IN 2009!

thank you

Dave Kopsell
 Jennifer Lindquist
 Lisa Marshall
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horticulture center

ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

HOURS OF OPERATION
dawn to dusk

LOCATION
the Center is located on Raab Road in Normal
between Heartland and Lincoln Colleges.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
contact Jessica Chambers at 309-438-3496
or email at horticulture@ilstu.edu

*the ISU Horticulture Center is part of the Department of Agriculture
within the College of Applied Science and Technology*