



March 2009

BARC is part of the USDA's Agricultural Research Service and encompasses programs at the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center; the U.S. National Arboretum in Washington, D.C.; and worksites in Chatsworth, New Jersey; Presque Isle, Maine; and McMinnville, Tennessee. BARC is the largest and most diversified agricultural research complex in the world. BARC's record of accomplishments and its ongoing programs have made it a world leader in agricultural research.

Blowing our own horn! 

USDA NEW LEADER PROGRAM

Three members of the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center and one member of the National Program Staff graduated this past February in the USDA New Leader Program. One of the best experiences of a lifetime, the New Leader Program is an intensive six-month program designed to develop future public service leaders through personal assessment, experiential learning and individual development activities and opportunities. Each participant is challenged to grow and develop both personally and professionally. The investment BARC made in each participant is invaluable. It provided BARC future public service leaders with solid training and a developmental foundation in leadership skills and team building, which will enhance our own future agency developmental experiences. Cristina Paul stated "In this day and age leaders need to be able to lead in all aspects of the word from providing a common goal, supplying motivations, giving clear direction while mentoring, and finally being humble enough to properly thank all who were involved in the journey..." Thank you BARC for letting us participate in the NLP!



From left to right Biological Science Laboratory Technicians Verneta Gaskins and Julia M. Cabrera-Woscek, Program Analyst Tracy Havermann and Horticulturist Cristina Paul

BA UPDATES

USDA OUTLOOK WEB ACCESS SUSPENSION

At 11pm on January 15th, 2009, ARS OCIO disabled Outlook Web Access (OWA). This was in response to an order by USDA CIO, Charles Christopherson entitled "Suspension of Outlook Web Access and Other Web-based E-Mail Systems." This order covered the entire US Department of Agriculture, not just ARS. No exceptions or waivers were permitted. This action had a huge impact on how ARS conducts business. Our users relied on OWA to access email from home and on travel. PDAs such as Trio phones and other similar devices also relied on this technology to receive and send email. Even on the Beltsville Area's network, about two thirds of the PCs relied on the protocol that underlies OWA because they were not on the ARS "trusted" network. Initially, it was hoped that measures could be developed to counter the cyber threat and OWA would eventually be restored. This was not to be and we have since been informed by the Department that OWA will not be available "for the foreseeable future." The only solution currently available for remote access to the ARS email system is to obtain a VPN (virtual private network) account. The ARS email system also incorporates a Blackberry Enterprise server permitting government owned Blackberry cell phones to access ARS email provided an account is established. You should contact your Institute IT Specialist for details on how to obtain either account and for assistance installing the VPN client software on your computer. ARS is working on alternatives to permit remote access that will be acceptable to the Department. The nature of the cyber threat that created this situation has not been disclosed.

WebTA UPDATE

All employees for the Beltsville Area are being trained to start entering and validating their own timesheets and submitting leave requests through the system. Beltsville plans to have the system fully implemented by April 1, 2009. You can visit the website <http://www.usda.gov/da/webTA/> to print the employee's guide and receive training by taking the WebTA Employee Tutorial. If you look to the right of the screen you can view the most frequent questions and answers or you can send your request to Adrienne Labega, 504-6746, Adrienne.labega@ars.usda.gov or Katrina Washington, 504-5534, Katrina.washington@ars.usda.gov.

UPDATE ON NATIONAL PRIORITIES LIST

A lot of progress has been made since 1994 when BARC was listed on the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) National Priorities List (NPL), otherwise known as "Superfund." BARC was listed as a result of EPA-required evaluations of past practices at Federal facilities. Although no imminent threats to human health and the environment were detected, BARC has followed a systematic review of the property under a Federal Facility Agreement with EPA to determine the location, nature, and any possible hazards posed by Areas of Concern (AOCs). By 1997, there were 167 AOCs identified, but the number has been reduced to 61 that are in various stages of the process. There are 34 recommended for no further action, and the remaining 27 are in various stages of screening, investigation, and cleanup. The NPL work is overseen at BARC by our Senior Remedial Project Manager, Mr. Dana Jackson, who is an environmental scientist working in the Safety, Occupational Health and Environmental Staff. For more information, call 301.504.5557, or email Dana.Jackson@ars.usda.gov.

On the Research Side...

ARS SCIENTISTS PARTICIPATE IN SYMPOSIUM ON BIOLOGICAL CONTROL OF ANTHROPOD PESTS

On February 8-13, entomologists Matt Greenstone and Don Weber of ARS Invasive Insect Biocontrol and Behavior Laboratory, Beltsville, Maryland, and Bob Pfannenstiel, ARS Beneficial Insects Research Laboratory, Weslaco, Texas, presented invited papers at the 3rd International Symposium on Biological Control of Arthropods in Christchurch, New Zealand. Greenstone discussed research on detection of pest remains in insect predators using prey-specific molecular probes and how to use this information in making pest management decisions. Weber detailed findings on insect and spider predation in several US crops based on 24-hour, including nocturnal, sampling, uncovering new and important natural enemies. Pfannenstiel presented evidence of the importance of plant nectars as food for spiders, which serve as important predators of insect pests in southern row crops. The purpose of the conference was to evaluate and improve biological control of arthropod (insect and mite) pests that threaten agricultural crops, livestock, and humans.



Mark Your Calendar!

UPCOMING EVENTS AT THE NATIONAL ARBORETUM

March 8, 9, & 10, Full Moon Hikes

Five-mile-long, mildly strenuous hike through moonlit gardens, meadows and woods. Fee.

March 14, Repotting Your Bonsai

Is it time to repot your bonsai? Learn how to do this important procedure correctly. Fee.

March 16 through 19, Solar Installation Workshop

This unique workshop will provide you with an opportunity to take part in a solar power system installation from beginning to end. Fee.

March 18, Environmental Film Festival

This film tells the story of the incredible reforestation of a mountain in France whose forests were devastated by misuse in the late 1800's. Free.

For more program listings and details, please see our website, <http://www.usna.usda.gov/Education/events.html> .

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