Greetings from the Department

Can you cite four significant events that took place in the year 1961? Here are a few: Patsy Cline released her hit song “I Fall to Pieces,” the U.S. and Cuba severed diplomatic ties, the Berlin Wall was completed, and Auburn University’s Funchess Hall officially opened. Since then, diplomatic relations with Cuba have been restored, the Berlin Wall has been dismantled, and, even though Funchess still stands, it is falling to pieces.

Now, however, Funchess is slated to go the way of the Berlin Wall. To replace Funchess, a state-of-the-art Agriculture Sciences Research Building has been proposed to house the departments of Entomology and Plant Pathology, Crop, Soil and Environmental Sciences, and Horticulture.

The Jackson, Mississippi, firm of Foil Wyatt Architects and Planners has been commissioned to develop a design and is expected to present the completed concept by end of year. We are cautiously optimistic. Cautiously is the operative word, because we have been told unequivocally that it is incumbent upon the College of Agriculture and the affected departments to raise a portion of the funds to support construction. While we don’t know exactly what amount will be required, we are told to expect something around $10 million. We will need the help of all affected departments to raise a portion of the funds, and it is incumbent upon the College of Agriculture and the Auburn Horticulture family.

I hope you like this new format for HortForum, which is now called the Department of Horticulture Annual Report. We trust that this new edition will help you get a good feel for our work, and we hope it will make you proud to be a part of the Auburn Horticulture family.

FALL 2015
willi09@auburn.edu
Professor and Head

Hortulture family.

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Annual Report. We trust that this new edition will

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as College of Agriculture Dean, AAES Director

In the Lives of Cancer Survivors

Department of Horticulture Statistics

Amy Wright Named Interim Associate Dean for Instruction Following Paul Patterson’s Selection as College of Agriculture Dean, AAES Director

Elina Coneva Addresses Fruit Production Challenges with Robust Research Activity

Charles Gilliam Leads Charge in Opening Up Options in Weed Control

Restoration of the Agricultural Science Degree, New 2+2 Agreement with Laurrel B. Wallace Community College

Hands on Gardening Instruction in the Department of Horticulture

Campus Dining Benefits from Campus Cooperation

Introducing the Shade Teaching Garden

Horticulture Practicum Taps Student Knowledge & Skills

Jay Spiers Works to Enhance Alabama’s Fruit Crop Industry

Auburn University Hosts Multistate Small Fruit and Viticulture Research Collaborative Meeting

Anna Marie Murphy Leads Professional Development & Short Term Teaching Assignment in Indonesia

Henry P. Orr Study Tour 2015: Japan

Henry P. Orr Study Tour 2016: Pacific Northwest & Canada

ACES Home Grounds Extension Team Studies Bees

Southeastern Professional Fruit Workers Conference

Department Hosts FFA Events

Extension’s Master Gardeners Making a Difference in the Lives of Cancer Survivors

Edgar Vinson & Jeremy Pickens Join the AU Department of Horticulture Faculty

Goodbye, Funchess Hall

Closing the Chapter on the Toomer’s Oaks Story

| DEPARTMENT OF HORTICULTURE STATS

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2 | AMY WRIGHT NAMED INTERIM ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR INSTRUCTION FOLLOWING PAUL PATTERSON’S SELECTION AS COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE DEAN, AAES DIRECTOR

Dr. Amy Wright, the Harry G. Ponder Endowed Professor of Horticulture, assumed the position of interim associate dean for instruction in the College of Agriculture on May 16 and will serve as interim until a national search for associate dean for instruction for the college is completed.

An internal search for an interim associate dean began in February when, after an extensive national search, Dr. Paul Patterson, who had served as the college’s associate dean for instruction since 2009, was named dean of the college and director of the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station.

Dr. Patterson, an Auburn native and a 1985 Auburn University agricultural business and economics alumnus, received his M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in agricultural economics from Purdue University in 1987 and 1994, respectively. As dean and director at Auburn, he is concentrating on hiring new faculty, building the college’s programs for the future and encouraging faculty to compete for research dollars available nationally and internationally.
In announcing Dr. Wright’s selection as interim associate dean, Dr. Patterson cited her outstanding teaching and research performance since joining the Auburn faculty in 2002. “Dr. Wright has a strong record of teaching and mentoring undergraduate and graduate students and of leading curriculum and academic assessment activities at Auburn,” Dr. Patterson said.

He noted that, in addition to an intense research focus on resource conservation and sustainability in landscape horticulture, Dr. Wright has robust instructional and advising programs that emphasize student engagement in the learning process through practical, real-world experiences.

Dr. Wright, who will return full time to her Department of Horticulture faculty position once the search for an associate dean for instruction is completed, said her interim administrative appointment is providing invaluable experience. “I’m grateful to be a part of the academic family in the College of Agriculture and honored to be selected as interim associate dean for instruction,” she said. “I’m excited about the opportunities for service and collaboration the position offers, and I look forward for instruction,” she said. “I’m excited about the opportunities for service and collaboration the position offers, and I look forward to working with our students, faculty and staff in support of our teaching and advising programs.”

ROBUST RESEARCH ACTIVITY

Dr. Elina Coneva’s research spans the fruit production challenges with robust research activity.

Fire Blight-Resistant Apple Rootstocks

Alabama growers are considering establishing high-density plantings with smaller trees, using new cultivars which costs 10 to 20 times more per land area to establish than lower-density plantings. This greatly enhances economic risk. Potential returns of high-density plantings, however, far exceed those of low-density plantings, particularly during the first 20 years. The central component of a high-density system is the rootstock. Fourteen newly developed size-controlling (dwarf), fire blight-resistant rootstocks were planted at the Chilton Research and Extension Center in 2014, where observations continue to determine which are the best fire blight-resistant apples for Alabama.

Fire Blight-Tolerant Asian Pear Cultivars

Asian pear trees are quite precocious and productive. In 2010, nine Asian pear cultivars were planted at the Chilton Research and Extension Center to field-test currently available fire blight-tolerant Asian pear cultivars for their adaptation to Alabama conditions. Tree survival varied considerably among cultivars, but preliminary results indicate that selected Asian pear cultivars could be successfully grown on a small scale.

Innovative European Grape Production Technology

Pierce’s Disease (PD), caused by the bacterium Xylella fastidiosa, is the major limiting factor for production of Vitis vinifera (European) grapes in the Southeast. University of California, Davis recently developed PD-resistant V. vinifera selections. Three of these European selections were planted in 2010 at the Chilton Research and Extension Center to study their overall performance in a high PD-pressure environment. So far, no PD infection has been detected. All are highly productive and grew vigorously throughout the years of vineyard establishment and have the potential to make viticulture in the South a profitable and sustainable farming option.

Rabbiteye Blueberry Cultivars and Selections in North Alabama

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4 | DR. GILLIAM LEADS CHARGE IN OPENING UP OPTIONS IN WEED CONTROL

Dr. Charles Gilliam and his team work diligently each year to provide much-needed research data on weed control in ornamental crops to both growers and major pesticide companies. Over the past year, Dr. Gilliam tested more than 40 combinations of differing herbicides and popular ornamental crops, both in containers and in the field. His work with indaziflam, a relative newcomer to the herbicide industry, provided growers with a new tool in the pre-emergence control of weeds in container and field production, demonstrating a longevity not previously seen with more traditional chemistries.

Dr. Gilliam has worked closely with the national IR-4 program for many years. By its own description, the IR-4 program has been the major resource for supplying pest-management tools for specialty crop growers by developing research data to support new EPA tolerances and labeled product uses. Dr. Gilliam has handed over his role as the Alabama State liaison with the program to Dr. Adam Newby but will continue to conduct trials with the IR-4 program.

While the herbicide trials keep Dr. Gilliam busy on a daily basis, he also enjoys getting out to see growers. Without that interaction, it would be impossible to understand the real day-to-day struggles of growers concerning weed control. Speaking at field days around the state and at national conferences, Dr. Gilliam sees face time with growers as a vital part of his work.

Dr. Gilliam just completed his 35th year of employment at Auburn University. His dedication to the nursery industry in providing necessary and relevant information to growers is greatly appreciated.
6 | HANDS-ON GARDENING INSTRUCTION IN THE DEPARTMENT OF HORTICULTURE

Many students are interested in eating healthier fruits and vegetables and would like an understanding of where our food comes from. These concerns have manifested in a number of ways across campus, including Campus Dining’s recent opening of the Auburn Wellness Kitchen, featuring high-quality, nutritionally balanced food for students and employees. There have also been several efforts to establish areas where gardeners can rent plots to grow their own vegetables, including the Office of Sustainability’s Community Garden. The Community Garden, however, does not offer any gardening instruction for those with little or no experience.

The Department of Horticulture offers a class in fruit and vegetable growing practices, Intermediate Fruit and Vegetable Production (HORT 4250). Class objectives are to provide students with hands-on instruction and experience in soil tillage and fertility, in growing vegetable transplants, and in planting, pruning, maintaining and harvesting vegetables and small and large fruits in a garden setting. There is no classroom, nor are there formal lectures and exams. Students meet once a week for three hours to perform a wide variety of gardening activities with their own hands and receive instruction on how to do them correctly. Students participate in maintenance activities (mowing, weeding, digging, hoeing and hauling mulch and manure) and can take home all the fruits and vegetables they grow.

Dr. Raymond Kessler’s background is greenhouse management of flowers, but his long history of home gardening was great preparation for teaching the course. Dr. Glenn Pain helps out with the class, which can be taken by any Auburn student and is offered every semester. At the beginning of the class, students are asked about their gardening background so that Dr. Kessler can instruct the urban dweller with no experience and the student who has been gardening for a long time.

The vegetable-growing area consists of 42 student-built raised beds, each 10 feet by 4 feet. A wide variety of vegetables—purple potatoes, Kohlrabi, Brussels sprouts, Swiss chard, beets and rutabagas, to name a few—is grown on a rotating basis to expose students to new tastes. Dr. Kessler’s hope is that students will remember what they have learned and will grow food for themselves and their families.
Dr. Jay Spiers

Dr. James D. "Jay" Spiers is an associate professor in the Department of Horticulture whose research focuses on sustainable fruit crop production systems and includes work with satsuma mandarin, blueberry, kiwifruit, blackberry, persimmon and pomegranate. Auburn has released three new kiwifruit cultivars—'AU Golden Dragon', 'AU Golden Sunshine' and 'AU Fitzgerald'—and Dr. Spiers' research objectives pertain to establishing best management practices to increase marketable yield. This past year, he has conducted studies on enhancing pollination, managing crop load and fruit quality and extending post-harvest longevity of kiwifruit. Also, another new gold-fleshed kiwifruit has been evaluated and will be released soon.

Efforts to enhance blueberry production include evaluating cultivar performance on higher pH soil and suitable mulch alternatives to pine bark. Satsuma mandarin research includes evaluating cultivar performance and fertilizer rates to manage alternate bearing. Dr. Spiers has conducted studies on enhancing pollination, managing crop load and fruit quality and extending post-harvest longevity of kiwifruit. Also, another new gold-fleshed kiwifruit has been evaluated and will be released soon.

The interaction of researchers in the NCCC212 group enables exchange of up-to-date information on the latest research trends as well as problems encountered in specific regions and states. These interactions have resulted in improved small fruit germplasm using classical breeding and molecular linkage; alternative production practices, including novel fruits, extended season and sustainable agriculture systems; a clearer understanding of the health value and flavor of berries; the identification of commodity-specific pests and new pest-control strategies; discovery of underlying mechanisms in the growth and development of small fruits; growth and development; and improved storage and shelf life.

"Love what you do, and you’ll never work a day in your life" is a lesson that Anna-Marie Murphy, research associate III, learned well from her parents. As a teenager she spent time every year traveling domestically and abroad to participate in short-term mission projects. On those trips she developed an appreciation for different cultures. As an Auburn University Horticulture undergraduate and graduate student, she was able to weave together a career in horticulture that encouraged her to establish meaningful cross-cultural relationships. These relationships have been cemented with multiple trips to England with study abroad programs, both as a student and staff member, and travels to Africa, Haiti and, most recently, Indonesia.

Murphy received an invitation to spend a week teaching continuing education courses to teachers at a small polytechnic school in Indonesia in 2015. Padamara Politeknik is a small, local technical college located in Tobelo, Indonesia, on the island of North Halmahera. The school offers classes in horticulture, animal husbandry, fisheries, accounting and business in hopes of educating local Indonesians to be self-motivated, productive members of their community.

After 28 hours in the air (with stops in Chicago, Seoul, Singapore and Manado), Murphy landed at a glorified airstrip in Galera, Indonesia. Children ran along the edge of the banana forests parallel to the plane to see the bale (pronounced bou-lay) disembarking. Rule is a term for fair-skinned foreigners, and being one can work both for and against you. She found the Indonesians to be generally kind, mild-mannered and respectful people.

During the week, Murphy was asked to present some basics of hydroponic plant production that could be incorporated into the home garden or into a small home business. Teachers at the college discussed their biggest successes and struggles. They were facing some new and fairly rigorous government regulations—primarily having their research published in an international journal—to maintain their qualifications to teach. With no prior research program in place, these teachers were going to have to develop their own original research projects and then publish results in an internationally recognized journal in their field. It was decided that, while a short lecture on hydroponics was still beneficial, their week together would be better spent learning what made for relevant research, how to develop research protocols and how to write journal articles.

"I so enjoyed spending time learning with them and from them what plants and crops were native to the area and how they could research ways to increase production through a long list of best management practices," Murphy said. "We also discussed the importance of making information readily available to the public. At the end of the week, I left feeling like they were feeding off of each other, and I was no longer needed—which, in community development, is the ultimate goal."

Murphy made some lasting friendships on the trip and still keeps up with a number of people she met. The Department of Horticulture hopes to maintain the relationship with Padamara Politeknik and is always looking for opportunities to continue the exchange of ideas and experiences. If you would like more information about how to be involved, please contact Murphy at murphy@auburn.edu.
For the first time in the program’s history, the Orr Study Tour ventured across the Pacific Ocean to Japan in 2015. Eight undergraduate students—Augusta Thurmond, Hannah Mattil, Katie Blastos, Mary Mathis, Camp Hand, Whitaker Knight, Carter Rivers and Connor Ryan—along with graduate students Jayne Funderburk and Evan Ware and Dr. Carolyn Robinson flew to Tokyo for a 10-day tour of areas around Tokyo and Kyoto. Japan was beautiful, and the people were wonderful as well.

In Kyoto, the group saw several temples and the gardens around them, including Ryoan-ji, Ninna-ji, and Tenryu-ji. These were amazing examples of craftsmanship and meticulous care. There were areas covered in moss under the trees where men sat with small spoons removing weeds.

The Orr study group was enthusiastically met at the train station in Wazuka by the vice president of the Obubu Tea Farm, Yasuharu Matsumoto, who took them directly to the tea fields. Students and faculty learned about the care of the plants, as well as the harvesting and processing of tea leaves. They hand-harvested a row of Camellia sinensis var. sinensis plants with Mount Fuji in the background, a wonderful spot for spectacular views of the strawberry field. The group moved through the LanSu Chinese Garden, visiting the downtown area to enjoy the gardens around them, including Ryoan-Ji, Ninna-Ji, and Tenryu-ji. These were amazing examples of craftsmanship and meticulous care. There were areas covered in moss under the trees where men sat with small spoons removing weeds.

After returning to Tokyo, they took a train to the base of Mount Fuji for the Fuji Shiba-zakura, or Moss Phlox, Festival. There was a large field covered in swaths of different moss phlox cultivars with Mount Fuji in the background, a wonderful spot for spectacular views. In Tokyo, the group also saw the East Gardens of the Imperial Palace, Koishisawa Korakuen Gardens, a favorite; the Asakusa Kannon festival; the Ota Maru Garden, Italian Garden, Rose Garden, Sunken Garden, and Children’s Pavilion, all of which were thoroughly covered in over a million blooming plants.

The trip was capped off with a tour of Butchart Gardens, a beautiful Edwardian estate who created it; and Hatley Castle and Gardens, a beautiful Edwardian estate with a European flair to the landscaping. The jewel of the trip was Butchart Gardens, a limestone quarry–turned–garden showcase by the Butchart family. This was a condensed version of Philadelphia’s Longwood Gardens, including a Japanese Garden, Italian Garden, Rose Garden, Sunken Garden and Children’s Pavilion, all of which were thoroughly covered in over a million blooming plants.

The trip was capped off with a tour of Olympic National Park that both inspired and informative, offering the Auburn group Douglas fir, western cedar and Sitka spruce trees, along with elk, ducks and waterfalls. The tour guide was as humorous as he was informative, with a great history of the Quinault Indians, the national park itself and the many salmon of the Northwest. What a wonderful experience for students and faculty to treasure.

Those who made up the Auburn 2016 Orr tour delegation included undergraduate Logan Bost Wright and Austin Holland; graduate students Jennifer Derrow, Sydney Holmes, Mitchell Vaughan, Jax Lewis, Christine Paul, Daniel Greenwell and Zoe Yang; and faculty members Dr. Carolyn Robinson and Dr. Joe Eakes.

Auburn horticulture students who participated in the 2015 Orr study tour to Japan pose outside a five-story pagoda they visited.
Auburn University’s Home Grounds Extension team is starting a new project with Dr. Charles Ray, entomologist at the Plant Diagnostic Lab. The Bee Biodiversity Initiative is a collaboration among researchers, Extension specialists and citizen-scientist volunteers to better understand the bee populations in the nation’s South and Southwest. While the honeybee industry has gotten a lot of attention for pollination services and honey production, little is known about North American native bees. This project will survey and identify the many bees present across Alabama and record their floral relationships—adult feeding and food provisioning for larvae. Kerry Smith, Home Grounds Team coordinator and State Master Gardener Program coordinator, said Master Gardener volunteers will be a large part of this project.

Dr. Elina Coneva, Chilton Research and Extension Center director James Pitts and Gary Gray with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System organized and hosted the Southeastern Professional Fruit Workers Conference in October 2015 in Montgomery. This regional conference brings together researchers, experiment station and extension personnel from 13 Southeastern states and provides an excellent opportunity to hear the latest progress and emerging issues in fruit research from across the Southeast.

At the 2015 meeting, 26 research papers were presented on issues in fruit research from across the Southeast. Participants enjoyed the unique opportunity to visit Gold Kiwi Farm for gold-fleshed kiwifruit production in the Southeast. At the second stop, participants had an opportunity to interact with Mountainview Orchards farmers in Jemison and discuss peach and apple production issues. During the visit to the Chilton Research and Extension Center in Clanton, the group toured numerous ongoing research projects that are focused on well-established peach, plum and blackberry crops as well as alternative fruit crops, such as Oriental persimmon, Asian pears, European grapes and golden kiwifruit. Then, a visit to Jemison’s Petals from the Past provided a great learning opportunity on fruit and vegetable crops and farming systems and was an excellent venue for enjoying warm Southern hospitality, with a delicious meal and light entertainment.

Meeting participants felt welcomed and appreciated. A group member said this was his 33rd SEPFW meeting and was the best he had ever attended.

The Department of Horticulture hosted the Alabama FFA Spring Judging Clinic in February 2016 and the Alabama FFA State Career Development Event Finals in June for the Floriculture and Nursery/Landscape competitions. Dr. Adam Newby coordinated the Nursery/Landscape events, and Dr. Carolyn Robinson coordinated the Horticulture events. The purpose of FFA Career Development Events is to give high school FFA members an opportunity to use skills they have acquired in Agriscience Education courses and to make FFA members more fully aware of the horticultural enterprises in Alabama.

Some 247 students from more than 30 high schools attended the Spring Clinics, where Auburn Horticulture graduate students helped prepare the students for Career Development Event competitions in the Floriculture and Nursery/Landscape categories. The top teams from the spring regional competitions from each district in the state competed at the State FFA Career Development Event Finals hosted by the department in June. Alabama’s winning team in each category will compete in the National FFA Convention this fall.

Harvest for Health began when the University of Alabama at Birmingham’s Comprehensive Cancer Center partnered with Alabama Extension agents (2013-16) to create a gardening intervention project. The purpose was to increase vegetable intake and improve physical function and quality of life for cancer survivors. Tools were a home garden and an Extension-trained Master Gardener to lean in as a mentor. For 12 months, survivors planted, grew and harvested their vegetable gardens.

Initial results indicate that cancer survivors ate more vegetables, improved their strength and flexibility, were more motivated to exercise daily and had dramatically higher levels of telomerase, which many consider a predictor of healthy aging. One cancer survivor wrote a letter to her Master Gardener mentor: “I have enjoyed the Harvest for Health program so much. Gardening has become the first thing I do every morning. I think the best thing you taught me is to ‘have fun with your garden.’” She added that she and her husband have become lifelong gardeners. Another participant said, “I may not always feel up to it, but if I know there’s a tomato or something to be picked, you better believe that I am going to sit here and eat it.”

The National Institutes of Health partially funds the Harvest for Health program so much. Gardening has become the first thing I do every morning. I think the best thing you taught me is to ‘have fun with your garden.’” She added that she and her husband have become lifelong gardeners. Another participant said, “I may not always feel up to it, but if I know there’s a tomato or something to be picked, you better believe that I am going to sit here and eat it.”

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For more information, contact Kerry Smith at smithkp@auburn.edu.
Edgar Vinson served as a research associate for 19 years in the Department of Horticulture. In that capacity, he coordinated the statewide vegetable variety trials and worked with local growers to conduct on-farm fruit and vegetable research to promote sustainability of farm operations. During those same 19 years, he received both an M.S. degree and a Ph.D. in Horticulture.

In 2016, Dr. Vinson became an Extension specialist in fruit crops. He now has statewide responsibilities for Extension programming with a primary emphasis on sustained vegetable production in the subtropical coastal regions of Alabama.

"I believe that in my position, it is important to strengthen relationships with our growers and to have continued dialog with them to assess their needs and concerns," he said. "It is also important to stay abreast of new and emerging challenges that may threaten their livelihood, such as the Spotted Winged Drosophila and the Brown Marmorated Stink Bug, to help growers stay ahead of these challenges."

Dr. Vinson will provide education and training for the technical innovations that will ultimately enhance growers’ ability to sustain their operations and remain a source of nutritious produce for the health and wellbeing of our communities. Dr. Vinson can be reached at 205-646-3910 or by email at vinosed@auburn.edu.

Dr. Jeremy Pickens was recently named Extension specialist for Nursery and Greenhouse. His appointment will be 50 percent research and 50 percent Extension, with the primary focus on the Nursery and Greenhouse Industry in Mobile and Baldwin counties. Dr. Pickens’ office and research will be housed at the Ornamental Horticulture Research Center in Mobile. His research will be focused on irrigation efficiency, pest-management strategies and other industry-based research as needed.

Dr. Pickens got his start in horticulture working in nurseries in Mobile County through high school and college. He received his B.S. (2005) and M.S. (2008) degrees in Horticulture at Auburn University in 2005 and 2008, respectively. He earned his Ph.D. from Auburn in Fisheries and Allied Aquacultures, where he researched methods to integrate intensive fish production with horticulture crop production. Dr. Pickens can be reached at (251) 342-2456 or by email at pickensj@auburn.edu.

Funchess Hall has served three College of Agriculture departments since 1961, but it has seen better days. That fact is not news to the Auburn Facilities Management team tasked with keeping it going. Dan King, Auburn’s associate vice president for Facilities Management, minced no words in his evaluation of the building, saying, “Funchess Hall is in a deteriorated state and has outlived its useful life.”

In November 2015, the Auburn University Board of Trustees agreed with King’s evaluation and approved a plan calling for the demolition of Funchess and construction of a new Agricultural Sciences Research Building for the College of Agriculture’s Horticulture, Entomology and Plant Pathology, and Crop, Soil and Environmental Sciences departments. Tentative plans are for the new building to be located on West Samford Avenue adjacent to the USDA-owned property at the West Samford-South Donahue intersection.

Full Wyatt Architects and Planners in Jackson, Mississippi, has been selected for the project, which is to be financed by a combination of university funds, state funds and private gifts. This is an opportunity to support the Department of Horticulture in this long anticipated process. November 2015 is the deadline for accumulating funds for the building, if the requisition is not forthcoming, the project could be withdrawn and resubmitted when funds are available.

A new building would enhance Horticulture’s attractiveness to recruit faculty, undergraduate and graduate students and would provide much-needed state-of-the-art research and instructional laboratory facilities. If funding is achieved and the new building is constructed, Funchess will be leveled.

On Jan. 27, 2011, “Al From Dadeville” called the Paul Finebaum Show, a syndicated sports radio program, to boast that Auburn fans would not be enjoying the traditional rolling of the two iconic live oaks (Quercus virginiana) at Toomer’s Corner much longer because, to retaliate for the University of Alabama’s 2010 Iron Bowl loss to cross-state rival Auburn University, he had poisoned them with Picloram. Within three days of the five-year ordeal that only ended in February 2016 with the replanting of 10 progeny of the original live oaks located at Toomer’s Corner.

The Future: The poisoning of the Auburn Oaks at Toomer’s Corner was a disruptive and costly personalization of a rivalry gone awry. The replacement trees, however, appear healthy and in good condition, have a greater volume of soil to expand into and are better situated to anchor the Class of 1917 portals. The plaza is more expansive and includes a new arching wall lined with seedlings from the original Auburn Oaks. And, as a result of the poisoning, other trees on campus now are more appreci ated and protected. Since the poisoning, Auburn’s Facilities Management has incorporated more rigorous and expansive tree protection measures into its Design and Construction Standards, including costly penalties. The first ISA-certified arborist has been hired to manage campus trees, and the university was recently recertified as a Tree Campus USA. While many of these changes are small steps, cumulatively, they speak well for the future of trees on Auburn University’s campus.

LATE NOTE: On Saturday night, Sept. 24, 2016, an individual intentionally set fire to one of the replacement oaks following Auburn’s win over LSU. An eye witness to the crime followed the perpetrator, who was caught and arrested shortly after committing the act. As of publication time, the outlook for the heavily damaged oak was uncertain; the suspect was awaiting a pretrial hearing on charges of desecration of a vulnerable object and public intoxication, both misdemeanors, and a felony charge of first-degree criminal mischief.

Funchess Hall

This is one of the 10 progeny of the original Auburn Oaks that was planted in February 2016 to replace the two poisoned and removed oaks.
This is our work.

THIS IS AUBURN.

AUBURN UNIVERSITY IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION/EMPLOYER.