

Presidential Biography

Dewayne L. Ingram

President of ASHS, 2011–2012

Professor, Department of Horticulture, University of Kentucky, Lexington

Dewayne L. Ingram grew up on a small family farm in McMinn County, Tennessee, about 45 miles south of Knoxville. Through 10 years as a 4-H'er he was introduced to the University of Tennessee, where he was offered a scholarship in the College of Agriculture. He said he didn't really know what Ornamental Horticulture and Landscape Design was, but he knew he didn't milk it. But the more he learned, the more he enjoyed horticulture. He graduated with his BS in 1974. During his college days, he ran a part-time landscape design and installation business, hiring fellow students to help. He completed his PhD in 1977 in Plant and Soil Science and began his first faculty position in Ornamental Horticulture at the University of Florida. In this Extension, research, and teaching position in nursery crops, he moved through the ranks to Full Professor. In 1990 he moved to the University of Kentucky as the Chair of the Horticulture Department, a position he held for 19 years. In 2009, he moved into an Extension/Research/Teaching position in nursery crops with an emphasis in sustainable systems. Since moving back to a faculty position, he has been developing an expertise in Life Cycle Assessment and has focused on the carbon footprint of



nursery plants at harvest and throughout their life cycle. In 2010, he served as the Panel Manager for the USDA/NIFA Specialty Crop Research Initiative.

Dewayne has been a member of ASHS since 1977. He has served ASHS in many capacities including: Fellows Screening Committee, 2004–08; Chair, Continuing Strategic Planning Committee, 2001–04; Member, Implementation Team for *Hort-Technology*, 1989–90 (six-person committee responsible for developing and implementing this journal); Editorial Board for *Hort-Technology*, 1990–99; Member, Certified Professional Horticulturist Board, 1996–99;

Member, Annual Conference Technical Program Committee, 1995–97; Annual Conference Chair, 1995–96; and Chair, ASHS Nursery Crops Working Group, 1988–89. He has also served ASHS through the Southern Region, as President in 2000–01 and Chair of the Administrators Working Group, 1994–95.

Dewayne was selected as Fellow of ASHS in 2001 and received the Paul Smeal Leadership and Administration Award, Southern Region–ASHS, 2008; Distinguished Achievement Award for Nursery Crop–ASHS, 1990; Outstanding Junior Faculty Award in the Institute of Food and Agricultural Science, University of Florida, presented by Gamma Sigma Delta, 1990; Nursery Extension Award, presented by the American Nursery and Landscape Association, 1988; Porter Henegar Award for Outstanding Horticultural Research, presented by the Southern Nursery Association, 1986; and Young Extension Educator Award, Southern Region–ASHS, 1985.

He and his wife of 39 years, Pat, spend a lot of time with their family. They are fortunate to have their children in Lexington: their son, Brent; daughter, Trisha, and her husband, Matt, and their fun 2-year-old grandson, Cole.

ASHS Presidential Address: It is a Great Time to be a Horticulturist

Dewayne L. Ingram

August 3, 2012

It has been a real pleasure to serve as ASHS President this year. The first two years on the Board have been busy and rewarding. I have learned so much and have enjoyed close interaction with ASHS staff, particularly Mike Neff and Tracy Shawn. Mike and Tracy, your professionalism, commitment, and service are appreciated. I have also enjoyed working with the current Board. The membership has elected a capable, committed, and productive Board. To the 2012 Board, I want you to know that your contributions to ASHS and to me personally are highly valued.

To support my premise that “It is a Great Time to be a Horticulturist,” I will touch on three general topics:

- Horticulture in the landscape of U.S. and international agriculture

- The evolving profession and science of horticulture
- ASHS: Now and in the future

Horticulture in the Landscape of U.S. and International Agriculture

Horticulture is being recognized for its contribution to the agricultural economy and human well-being. We have a long way to go, but I have seen notable changes in the last few years at the national level. And, it is about time. Horticultural crops represent almost one-half of the U.S. crop farm gate value. That doesn't even include the value added to our products in the marketplace or value of the service sector. Some in Washington, DC and other places are starting to pay more attention to horticulture.

John Lea-Cox and I attended a meeting of science societies and stakeholders organized by the outgoing National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) director, Roger Beachy, to strategize advocacy for increased agricultural research funding. During that discussion, some among the agricultural science societies were surprised by the fact that horticulture was one-half of crop farm gate value while others were well aware of it. It seemed to be recognized in the room that horticulture puts a colorful, positive face on U.S. agriculture to the general public. It is just gratifying that we are at the table, for that has not always been the case.

The 2010 U.S. farm gate value of fruits, nuts, and vegetables was estimated to be more than \$33.4 billion. The future looks

bright as fruits and vegetables will be in even greater demand by healthier populations.

According to a recent publication by the Green Industry Research Consortium, the U.S. farm gate value of nursery and floricultural crops in 2007 exceeded \$27 billion while the green industry as a whole generated \$175.26 billion in total revenue, employed 1.95 million people in full-time and part-time jobs, which resulted in \$53.16 billion in labor earnings and \$107.16 billion in value added to the U.S. product and service economy. These are large numbers in everyone's frame of reference.

Unfortunately in the mind of some, the U.S. government has chosen to use the term "Specialty Crops" when addressing the needs and opportunities of horticultural crops. However, they **are** talking about our industries and they **are** providing more support than ever before for research and other programs. Yes, I would rather they use the term horticulture, but I am happy we are on the radar with increasing value. Don't forget, it wasn't that long ago when horticultural crops were referred to as "minor crops" in agricultural statistics. I think it is the documented economic impact of horticulture and the organized voice of horticulture industry groups, with the support of ASHS, that has commanded the attention we are seeing.

Horticulture continues to increase in economic importance internationally. The demand for horticultural crops is increasing, particularly in developing nations. For example, world production of fruit increased 82% from 1990 to 2009 while vegetable production increased 65% according to a recent publication entitled "Harvesting the Sun: A Profile of World Horticulture" published by the International Society for Horticultural Science (ISHS). I highly encourage you to read this report, written primarily to showcase the importance of horticulture and horticultural research to the general public, policy makers, and the general press.

Morrill Act and USDA Celebrations

Yes, horticulture is gaining more attention in the agricultural landscape. But, we can't talk about the advancement of horticulture and agriculture in general without acknowledging and celebrating the land-grant system on this the 150th anniversary.

Although my July Reflections column focused on the 150th anniversary of the Morrill Act, which established the land-grant university system, and the birth of the U.S. Department of Agriculture—I want to celebrate those milestones here. These institutions are the envy of the world and from which the world has benefited greatly.

It is important that we know the history of the land-grant system and teach its worth to current and future generations. I have used a lecture period in our "Introduction to Horticulture Professions" course for more than 15 years to introduce horticulture majors to the history, nature, benefits, and opportunities of land-grant universities, particularly

the University of Kentucky. It is imperative for our students and our colleagues without experience in a land-grant university to know how and why the land-grant university system was established and to understand the relevance of its mission.

It is constructive to pause and reflect on the impact these institutions have made in the world, including the science and profession of horticulture. We must celebrate our successes, but it is true that the land-grant system has many challenges. The mission of these institutions will not be maintained without a fight for additional support and modifications in the way we provide higher education, conduct research, and extend that research to commercial horticulture and the public. I encourage each of us to reflect on the impact that these institutions have made in our individual lives and then explore ways we can give back through innovative ideas for improving the system.

So, horticulture is well positioned in U.S. and international agriculture and is increasing in value: economically, politically, and socially. This is one reason I say, "It is a great time to be a horticulturist."

The Evolving Science and Profession of Horticulture

As I already mentioned, we live in a time of increasing speed of change. That is certainly true in the science and profession of horticulture. That quick-paced change is another reason I say it is a great time to be a horticulturist.

Research with horticultural crops is utilizing increasingly complex and innovative tools of basic science. From my perspective, the continuum of discovery to application ... that is, from the laboratory to the research farm ... and from the research farm to commercial application ... is more seamless today than a decade ago. Translational research is a common topic of discussion within the scientific community and horticultural research is, by its very nature, translational.

The problems and opportunities for improving horticultural crop production and marketing systems and landscape horticulture are being addressed by increasingly complex approaches. Component research has a place in our toolbox, but such research must be done in the context of a system and ideally a system defined by a multi-disciplinary team of scientists and practitioners.

The Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI) defined multi-disciplinary teams that function in all phases of a project as "trans-disciplinary" to emphasize the requirement for collaboration within and between disciplines. Successful proposals have demonstrated interaction and planning in a multi-disciplinary, collaborative environment that focuses the team on the defined objective.

Continuing with thoughts and opinions about the evolving science and profession of horticulture ... many foresee that a significant shift in the paradigm of higher education is

coming. We must be certain that horticulture is part of the mix, looking beyond degrees and considering specialized certificates as well as alternative teaching and "learning evaluation" methods. I shared more thoughts on this subject in my July reflections column. It is a fact that the way students learn and, therefore, effective ways of teaching are changing. Horticulture education at non-land grant universities will continue to increase and horticulture will likely be taught in many different venues. Online courses, hybrid courses, and use of social media to enhance learning among students with decreasing attention spans and higher expectation for entertainment are commonplace. We need to get ahead of the curve on this shift and take the lead at our institutions to instigate change.

Extension is also evolving from less one-on-one consulting and county/area meetings to state, multi-state, and national conferences and electronically available information. YouTube is being used to teach highly specific skills and techniques. Smartphone apps are becoming important decision aids for fast-moving horticultural enterprise managers. Comprehensive, easily navigated websites as those collaboratively developed through E-extension will continue to be important. Our clientele is looking for education that fits into their schedule and useable information that is immediately accessible whenever and wherever they need it.

Economic conditions in the U.S. and the world are contributing to the rate of change in our academic institutions. Assaults on budgets over the last decade, and particularly since 2008, have forced change. Most of that change is occurring when faculty positions are lost, and most of those lost positions are not strategic. Loss of positions and critical areas of expertise is usually the "luck of the draw" ... dependent upon which positions are vacant.

Any way you look at it, the loss of faculty positions is reducing the capacity for future impact. Some of my colleagues talk about current circumstances as the "new normal." I certainly hope this is not the new normal in the long term and that we are near the bottom of this pendulum swing. It would be easy to become pessimistic and acquiesce to the present, but we must fight the good fight. Yes, I have been accused on more than one occasion of being an eternal optimist, but I wear that badge proudly. Pessimism is more likely to lead to defeat while optimism, tempered with realism, is more likely to lead to solutions and innovations.

Competitive grant funds targeting horticultural crops could not have come at a more critical time. SCRI, Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI), and the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBG) have leveraged our dwindling funds and have made significant impact on our ability to conduct research and extend that research to clientele. The successes in the 2008 Farm Bill were due to the recognition of

the size and economic scope of horticulture and the ability and commitment of industry groups, supported by ASHS, to make a united, compelling argument on Capitol Hill and to members of Congress back on their home turf. ASHS is also working with others to positively influence the evolution of the 2012 Farm Bill.

Continuing to advance horticulture in this arena will require even more effort than before. Now we must convince national leaders and the general public that horticulture is not only a critical element of the economy but will meet societal needs. We must show the impact, the return on investment if you will, of public investments in horticultural education and research. We need to show the general public not only how horticulture is contributing to their quality of life but also that horticulture is **required** to maintain and advance their quality of life. We must convince them that the desired quality of life is not possible without the nutrition from fresh fruits and vegetables or the environmental quality created by plants in their interior and exterior living spaces. As I have heard my friend Charlie Hall say many times, we have to know and communicate our “value proposition” to the consumer. Individuals, companies, industry associations, and professional societies have to be engaged in communicating that value proposition. We must link horticulture to important societal needs, such as human nutrition and obesity, human habitat, human health, ecosystem services, and the economic benefits—jobs, just to mention a few. When we communicate this value to the public, then horticulture and horticultural science will become more relevant to them and that will translate into the investment of time and money.

As part of our value proposition and our need to ingrain our relevance in public opinion, we need to continue pushing for increased professionalism in horticulture and credentialing our practitioners. The Certified Horticulturist program is a great step in that direction but it will take time to yield the desired effect. Fred Davies and a cadre of ASHS members and staff are working to create a demand for these credentials, as well as fine-tune the training, testing, and certification processes. The “pull” for these credentials will occur when regulatory agencies, governments, and the general public see the value and demand them. However, agencies are hesitant to require such credentials for specific activities when there are not many credentialed individuals. It is a little like the chicken or egg scenario. We will persevere on this long road. We can take heart in that the Certified Arborist, a program of the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA), started small more than 25 years ago but now boasts 22,000 certified arborists worldwide, 80% of them in the U.S. Granted, ISA is primarily an industry organization, but maybe we need to partner with industry associations in horticulture credentialing efforts.

So, the science and profession of horticulture is advancing at a rapid pace. Sometimes we are influencing that advancement while at times we are just riding the wave. It is another reason I say: It is a Great Time to be a Horticulturist.

ASHS: Now and in the Future

Now let's focus a few minutes on the state of ASHS and our role in advancing the profession and science of horticulture.

ASHS is healthy. We are smaller in terms of membership than “back in the day,” but we are healthy. We are smaller primarily due to a reduced population in our traditionally targeted audience. However, we are healthy in terms of base membership and in terms of finances.

We are and will always be a professional society for horticulturists. ASHS is a member-led and member-guarded organization. Yes, the premier horticultural professional society is a volunteer organization. We become ASHS members voluntarily, to support our profession and to reap the benefits of membership. Volunteers provide the primary leadership, set policy, referee the publications, give awards, plan, participate in, and moderate the annual conference's technical program, nominate officers and hold elections, and perform many other functions of ASHS.

We are fortunate to have an excellent staff at headquarters that handles routine business matters, holds much institutional memory, and addresses organizational details effectively and professionally. On that note of institutional memory, I must congratulate Mike Neff again and thank him for his 25-plus years of dedicated service to ASHS. Mike has contributed significantly to our success.

The staff takes on the day-to-day operations of our society in an efficient manner. Under Mike's leadership we have reduced costs and increased efficiency to reflect the use of technology and the size of our organization. Our staff possesses unique and critical skills not easily provided by members. For example, I am thankful that our conferences are now managed by our professional staff. The Technical Program Committee still has primary responsibility for our program, but all of the other aspects of our conference are managed by our staff. Tracy Shawn effectively leads that charge with “all hands on deck” as the conference approaches.

However, in large part, the Society functions because the members care about the organization and are willing to serve on committees and to be nominated for various offices. We are motivated by a desire to see ASHS accomplish its mission and to promote our profession. We also benefit from the relationships we forge and the leadership skills we hone.

As a professional society, we too have to communicate our value proposition to current and potential members and demonstrate our relevance. The traditional target audience has been shrinking but we have not begun to

tap less traditional audiences. There is no doubt that two- and four-year non-land grant institution programs are significantly important to the future of horticulture. Therefore, it is imperative that ASHS extend its services to the horticulture faculty and students at those institutions and gain from their contributions. Horticulture faculty at community colleges are particularly under-represented in ASHS. This year we compiled a list of horticulture contacts at community colleges and emailed them information, some free resources and information about how their students can get free membership and an online subscription to *HortTechnology* while they are undergraduates. We will follow up with those contacts as the next semester begins.

I am anxious to see how this approach works, examine other options, and to commit to an all-out membership drive in which we all participate. Member surveys have confirmed that most of us are ASHS members because someone we respected suggested that we join! They not only suggested it, they modeled it through their active participation and involved us in that activity. Even at this annual conference, the Membership Committee has begun to consider strategies. Stay tuned and get ready to put some legs on our desire to engage and serve more horticultural scientists and professionals.

A primary ASHS value is in the fact that ASHS provides opportunities to develop collaborations. ASHS is all about collaboration. We provide tools and opportunities to birth and support collaboration. Among these are our newsletter, the Working Group Network, listserves organized along several commodity and cross-commodity lines, and of course the workshops, colloquia, and hallway conferencing at our Annual Conferences, just to mention a few.

ASHS collaborates with other professional and scientific societies when advocating for research funding and addressing restrictive policies. There is strength in numbers and we can accomplish more working together than independently at the organization level as well.

Additional opportunities for ASHS to collaborate revolve around important social issues that I mentioned earlier ... issues such as human nutrition, environmental protection, enhanced interior and exterior living spaces and human well-being. The expertise of several ASHS members resonates with these example issues. I encourage the related Working Groups, or perhaps a new Working Group, to think about how they can link to human health professions or other such groups. Symposia, associated with our Annual Conference or scheduled independently, are but one example of collaborative activities we might spearhead to increase opportunities to advance horticultural science.

In conclusion, it truly is a great time to be a horticulturist. The world is poised to acknowledge and respond to the value of horticulture products and services and to support the underpinning education and science.

The science and profession of horticulture is changing rapidly. Horticulture is relevant to society and ASHS is relevant to the science and profession of horticulture. I challenge us as horticulturists and ASHS members to ask, "How do my projects and programs in academia and industry contribute to advancing horticulture and solving

societal needs?" It is not just the development of technical information that is important, but also its dissemination and application. Solving problems and advancing opportunities regarding quality of life ... that is our value proposition. We are a source of solutions, not just budgets. Our programs, products, and services are not

a cost but an investment for enhanced quality of life. We need to view our work from that perspective, then articulate that value in as many venues as possible. We are part of the solution and we must continue to tell the story.

And that is why I think it really is A Great Time to be a Horticulturist.