

# CALS Milestones

*University Florist celebrates 80 years at MSU*

By Sasha Steinberg

FOR MORE THAN EIGHT DECADES, the University Florist has provided a fun, enriching environment for MSU students to gain the work and management skills they need to be successful in the floral industry and beyond.

“A university florist like this one is not common on college campuses,” said Lynette McDougald, who has served as florist business manager and plant and soil sciences instructor for 17 years.

She explained that in addition to being a full-service flower shop, the florist serves as a hands-on, instructional laboratory for students majoring in floral management. The university also has a student chapter of the American Institute of Floral Designers, which connects students to future employers and internship opportunities.

“The strength of the program is that all of that comes together and provides all of those learning opportunities,” she said.

In addition to McDougald and about 15 students each semester, the florist is staffed by Jane Johnston who assists McDougald on a part-time basis with overseeing the flower shop’s day-to-day operations.

Whether they aspire to go into retail floristry or pursue a “non-traditional shop” career, McDougald said the university’s floral management program and florist provide graduates with the experiences and skills they need to be successful.

“If you really want to manage your commodity and do it well, you need some science background with it,” she explained. “I think the strength of the floral management curriculum is that the students get horticulture, which collects that science base for them, and then they also take art and business classes.”

From processing flowers and filling orders to learning how to price and



Mississippi State University seniors Renee Wright (center) and Camille Tedder (right) brought home the overall baccalaureate school award from the recent American Institute of Floral Designer’s Student Floral Design Competition. Tedder took top individual honors at the competition and earned a \$3,000 scholarship to use toward her AIFD accreditation process. Both students work for The University Florist on campus. Lynette McDougald (left) is the faculty adviser for MSU’s Student AIFD chapter.

develop a budget, working at the florist “gives students a taste of retail, but also prepares them to go on to do things like wholesaling, event planning, brokering, and product development,” McDougald said, adding that the program has a high job placement success rate.

McDougald said selling locally made products is another point of pride for the florist. One of the business’s most popular products is Merigold-based McCarty’s Pottery.

“In 2009, we started selling McCarty’s Pottery and that changed the entire profile of this place,” McDougald said of the

purchase that has inspired her to bring in more local gift lines, such as Wolfe Birds from the Wolfe Studio in Jackson.

“For our students, if we have something from Jackson or Madison or the Delta, they can connect with it. It gives them a sense of home. For our guests who come to campus to visit, buying something made in Mississippi is a natural kind of thing and allows them to take a piece of our state with them.” ❖

## 50 Years of Turfgrass Management

By Dr. Jay McCurdy, Wayne Philley, and Dr. Barry Stewart

A HALF CENTURY OF TURFGRASS research, education, and service officially began with a single course in Turfgrass Management offered in 1965. Today, 450 graduates, many of whom have helped shape the role of turfgrass management throughout the nation, are among the elite Bulldog Turf alumni.

Turfgrass research and education grew simultaneously at Mississippi State. While the first turfgrass field plots were initiated in 1958, initial research efforts were spurred by forage and pasture research conducted for Mississippi beef and dairy production.

Dr. Louis Wise conducted the earliest turfgrass research program. He was hired in 1950 to head the new Pasture Management research and teaching program. His simultaneous interest in turfgrass is appropriately credited with founding MSU’s earliest turfgrass research program. Dr. Corwin Johnson joined the university in 1956 and contributed to the program through his research on “wintergrass” overseeding varieties for putting greens.

In 1958, an article in *Golfdom* expressed the following, “Good wishes

for a successful turf program to Dr. Louis N. Wise at the Mississippi State College at Starkville. Dr. Wise runs the first successful and only seed training school of its kind in the world.”

Numerous faculty and staff helped build the turf management program. Jeff Krans came to the university in 1975 and pushed for a Sports Turf Management track within the Turf program. Four years later, he hired Wayne Philley as a research technician, and together the duo developed several popular bermudagrass cultivars.

Philley and Krans developed numerous popular bermudagrass cultivars. Many of the turfgrasses developed by Philley and Krans were patented by the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station. The Rose Bowl field, the Arizona Diamondbacks field, and several prestigious golf courses are covered with MSU-MAFES turf.

In 1993, the program’s name changed to Golf and Sports Turf Management, and the curriculum underwent reforms

that are still reflected today: a mandatory co-op program was introduced, and students were allowed to select a primary focus—either sports turf or golf.

Students played an important role in shaping the program’s rich history. K. V. Estes was the first person to graduate with an interest in turf in 1957. He went on to design the “SoilReliever” aerification device. The first student to receive a graduate degree was Ben Fleming, who completed a master’s degree in agronomy in 1960, and the first bachelor’s degrees were awarded in 1967, to Harold Walker and Charles Winstead.

The first student to start and finish under the Turfgrass Management major was Randy Nichols, a 1969 graduate who spent most of his career as director of golf course operations at Cherokee Town and Country Club in Atlanta. Nichols also served as GCSAA president.

The present day program continues to emphasize cutting-edge turfgrass research. Foremost, though, the emphasis of MSU Turf is still on the students and producing quality turfgrass professionals. ❖

*This is an excerpt from a longer article that originally appeared in the summer 2015 edition of Mississippi Turfgrass. Dr. Jay McCurdy, assistant professor in the MSU Department of Plant and Soil Sciences in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, wrote the article with collaboration from Wayne Philley, senior research associate; and Dr. Barry Stewart, associate professor in Plant and Soil Sciences.*



LEFT: Spring 2015, Golf Course Operations class; ABOVE: File photo from department in 1985.