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The

# SASES Times

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Organized By: Michaela Turner | Purdue University

## Does Playing In The Dirt Make You Happy?:

According to an article written by Bonnie L. Grant on *the Gardening Know How* website there are antidepressant microbes in soil. They seem to cure the “serious blues” just like Prozac, but without the side affects. Maybe this is why us agronomist, soil scientist, and environmental scientist are always so happy! To read more about it go to <http://www.gardeningknowhow.com/garden-how-to/soil-fertilizers/antidepressant-microbes-soil.htm>



**Announcement:** The National SASES officer recently voted where next years spring meeting will be held. It was an extremely tough decision, but we are excited to announce that the Spring SASES Meeting will be held in Lubbock Texas and will be hosted by Texas Tech University. They say everything is bigger in Texas, so this may just be the biggest spring meeting yet! Congratulations Texas Tech!



**Golden Opportunity Scholars:** The Golden Opportunity Scholars is a program funded through the Agronomic Science Foundation. Select students are selected, through an application process, to participate in the program during their time at the National SASES Meetings in the fall. The program takes students and places them with professionals during the meetings who act as mentor. According to the American Society of Agronomy website “This exciting professional development program is aimed at strengthening the agronomy, crops, soils, and environmental science professions by encouraging students to enroll in related programs, with the intent of having them become the next generation of leaders in the profession.” Below are stories from some past Gold Opportunity Scholars.. Read about their experience to see if this is something that you may be interested in doing. More information about the program can be found at: <https://www.agronomy.org/awards/view/137>

**Emily Baer | Virginia Tech University:** My name is Emily Baer. I am a recent graduate (Dec. 2014) of Virginia Tech with a B.S in Crop and Soil Environmental Science. In the spring of 2014 I applied to the Golden Opportunity Scholar Program sponsored by CSA, SSSA, and ASA, with the intention of finding a mentor. I needed direction and guidance from somebody with more experience but equivalent passion for the field of soil science. I had no idea a trip to the annual conference of all three societies was a part of the award package until I received an email telling me I had won the award and a trip to Long Beach, CA for the professional meeting. The experience was exciting and insightful. I was able to witness the coming together of what seemed like thousands of people who had the similar passion for studying and working in environmental or agronomic science. At school, it is difficult to find people studying something other than engineering, communication or business. The conference erased that stigma from my brain. I was able to connect with other students and professionals who could hold a conversation about environmental issues with passion and authority. My favorite part of the experience was the series of field trips all of the students participated in the first day or so of the conference. I enjoyed talking with local wetland restoration professionals; I discovered my drive to get involved with land restoration. Being a golden opportunity scholar was insightful and humbling. I hope the program grows and continues. It is impactful for young, aspiring undergraduates in a field often disregarded in society as unimportant or “simple”.

**Rongkui Han | Cornell University:** The ASA-CSSA-SSSA Annual Conference was one of the grandest and most exciting events I have ever been to. I am very thankful for the Golden Opportunity Scholarship that gave me the chance to be in the beautiful state of California for this special scientific occasion. What I love the most about my experience at the conference was that I got to talk and listen to scientists from both theoretical and practical backgrounds, both the public and private sectors in agriculture, and both the United States and other nations around the globe.

Choosing from the huge selection of symposiums where hundreds of researchers presented their latest discoveries, I sat at more than twenty presentations, learning about cutting-edge science and technologies in soil microbes, crop breeding and genetics, cover crops, precision agriculture, big data in agriculture, and scientific writing. My knowledge in these various fields were refreshed and deepened. I especially like the Q&A session after each presentation. The questions raised from the audience often demonstrated systematic thinking, which I found humbling yet extremely inspiring.

As a GO scholar, we also had the chance to have a luncheon with leaders from all three fields of agronomy, crop science and soil science. I sat with the winner of the World Food Prize, Dr. Sanjaya Rajaram, the Global Breeder Sourcing Lead of Monsanto Company, Dr. Donn Cummings, and the soil scientist from Cornell University, Dr. Harold van Es, and hosted a conversation about the ongoing global climate change. At the end of the luncheon, when I stood up to summarize our conversation, I was amazed by the amount of information exchanged at our table in the short half an hour. The scientists talked about the current issues in agriculture, how science should be used in combating the upcoming crisis, and rising new topics that could potentially make enormous differences in world of agriculture. We concluded that the solution to the world food security problem, what is hastened by the climate change, has to involve open dialogs and mutual support between the public and private sectors in agriculture.

Coming back from the conference, I feel renewed and recharged as a future scientist in agriculture. To me, the conference was a snapshot of the daily devotion of current leaders in agricultural sciences, a platform to raise and resolve conflicts through conversations, and a big celebration for the past and future of agriculture. The conference opened my eyes to the harsh challenges and bright opportunities in agriculture. There is no one solution to these challenges, but all solutions have to be regionally adapted and sustainable. The conference retaught me the value of communication and commitment in pursuing a career in science.

**Ian Scadden | Brigham Young University- Idaho:** My name is Ian Scadden. I am a senior at Brigham Young University-Idaho, working towards my degree in Agronomy, Crop and Soil Science. I have been married for two years and my wife and I have a one year-old daughter and a second child due in late July. I intend to pursue graduate degrees in plant breeding and genetics, and then follow those up with a career in research and development of fruit crop.



My experience as a Golden Opportunity Scholar at the ASA meeting was spectacular. I had a lot of opportunity to network with people doing the kind of work I want to do. It was very beneficial to pick the brains of professionals, scientists, professors, and fellow students, and discuss the advances and challenges facing our industry in the future. It was excellent to be able to talk with university representatives about their universities and what they expect from students like me. None of this would have been possible without the GO Scholar program, and I am very grateful to have been selected for it. All in all, the ASA meetings were a splendid opportunity to see what is happening nationwide, to network with future colleagues, and to see where I can best make a difference as we feed the world.

**Agronomy Clubs Around the U.S.:** Here are some articles written by various clubs within SASES. Read some great articles about what they have been up to this semester. This is a great way to get new ideas for your club.

**Purdue University | Written By: Taylor Sigman** The Purdue Agronomy Club has had a very busy spring semester! The club hosted the annual International Feast on February 11th. Everyone from the Agronomy department was invited to bring their favorite dish from home. Attendees were able to try many different types of food and enjoyed each other's company. On February 18th, three agronomy grad students were invited to share their research with the club. Members learned more about graduate school and how to conduct viable research projects. On February 25th, many members traveled down to the Wabash River to do some ice-skating at Riverside Skating Rink. Some may have taken a few spills on the ice, but they perfected their skating techniques throughout the night! On March 11th, an agronomist from Ceres Solutions shared her knowledge about the agronomy industry with the club.

She focused on soil fertility, cover crops and irrigation. Her talk highlighted many topics that members are learning about in their classes. Just before spring break 7 members traveled to Madison, Wisconsin for the Regional SASES Meeting. It was a great opportunity to connect with other members from around the U.S., and to gain a new perspective of agriculture. On March 25th, the club toured the Boiler Butcher Block located in the Boiler Room. We learned about the steps involved in turning a live animal into a dinner plate. Also discussed was butchering sheep, pigs, and chicken. The Butcher Block caters to our diverse campus, so they try and have many specialty meat cuts available for retail. Many of our members are looking forward to the upcoming Ag Week on campus and Spring Fest. During Ag Week, the Agronomy Club will share more information about GMOs with our fellow Boilermakers. Spring Fest is a community event held on campus where students and staff create ways to teach all aspects of agriculture to the public. The club has created a display that teaches children how to grow plants for food and will also share information on GMOs. The Purdue Agronomy Club looks forward to sharing our knowledge with our fellow Boilermakers and community!



Students from Purdue ready to teach about GMO's

**Iowa State University Host 4-H Experience Agronomy Event | Written By: Elizabeth Widder** This year our Community Outreach committee decided to host an event that would educate students about agronomy. We came to the conclusion that a good target audience would be 4-H students in Iowa from grades 4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup>. This was the first event of its' kind that Iowa State University Agronomy Club hosted. A lot of planning, fundraising, and time went into this event since October. We hosted the event on April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015. We had 105 4-H'ers from around the state of Iowa come out to Agronomy Hall for the day. Registration began around 8:30am. After students were registered they had some time to take photos in the photo booth we had set up and work on some fun, educational agronomy handouts. At 9:00am we began our ceremony with a welcome from Dr. Lamkey, our department chair. After this the students were dismissed by their respective regions in Iowa and led by Agronomy Club members to four different sessions. These sessions covered important areas in agronomy including: climate, soils, weeds, and crop science. Four different professors from our Agronomy Department led the various sessions with the help of some of our club members.

After the sessions, we provided lunch for the students and their parents. We then did a quick wrap up activity where the students were able to earn prizes for sharing what they learned. The event was a huge success, the students had fun and learned about agronomy. We look forward to making this an annual event and improving the event for next year and many years to come. 4-H Experience Agronomy Event was a great way for our club to give to our community, give back to our department, and give agronomy club members a way to serve. If you would like more details and pictures of the event, you can like our Facebook page: 4-H Experience Agronomy Event.



**Iowa State University Agronomy Club  
Hosts 4-H Experience Agronomy Event**

**Kansas State University | Written By: Jessi Bramhall and Erin Bush** We are having a party! To celebrate the International Year of Soil, we decided to schedule several activities to speak to a large spectrum of ages. Our plan is to educate the community about soil all the way from first grade to adults. So far, we have participated in our university's agricultural week known as AgFest. At this event, we taught 80 first graders the basics about soils. Our curriculum included "what is soil," "what is soil made of," particle size, and soil texture. The students enjoyed a chance to get dirty and make soil texture ribbons!



**Kansas State teaching students about soil**

Our next event will take place at Kansas State University's Open House where we will have a booth set up with a poster about the basics of soils. Visitors will have an opportunity to learn how to use a soil texture triangle, make soil texture ribbons, and classify particle sizes. 6

The Riley County E.A.R.T.H. Event is another activity our club will be participating in. At this event we will educate fifth and sixth graders about the importance of soil, which will be similar to AgFest.

For our final project, we will be teaching a class at the 4-H Discovery Days. During our class we will cover some of the similar topics as covered in previous presentations. In addition to those topics, we will have more hands-on activities, including the opportunity for 4-Hers to build their own soil horizons to take home.

We are excited to celebrate soils with the youth and general public!

**Attention:** I need your help! If your club is doing awesome things or you have a remarkable member, write an article about it and send it to be published in the next issue of the SASES Times. The SASES Times is here to tell other schools what amazing things you are doing and inform others of great opportunities. Send your articles or ideas to me at [turne115@purdue.edu](mailto:turne115@purdue.edu)

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