## U. of Del. greenhouse prepares for ag day

NEWARK, Del. - Previous visitors to the University of Delaware's student-run Ag Day extravaganza are likely familiar with the College of Agricultural Sciences greenhouse. It's the site of one of the most popular of the day's activities, the bedding plant

Once again, students and staff will be ready with a variety of plants when Ag Day rolls around on April 30, from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m., rain or shine, at Agricultural Hall in Newark.

Plants grown by David Frey's production and management students and by the Horticulture Club will be offered for sale on a first come, first served basis. Included will be cabbage, pepper, lettuce, tomato, and eggplant seedlings; sweet basil; assorted houseplants; and bedding flowers of many varieties including salvia, petunia, dianthus, snapdragon, ageratum, coleus, dusty miller, gazania, marigold, zinnia, and alyssum. Most plants, the byproducts of classes, were grown by students for grades.

While Ag Day occurs once a year, greenhouse supervisor Paul Dennison keeps busy year-round growing plants for use in classrooms and by extension personnel in demonstrations as well as by Agricultural Experiment Station scientists in research.

For instance, Robert Carroll's plant pathology students grow plants in soil inoculated with fusarium fungus in the greenhouse, to observe the effectsof different seed treatments on controlling disease. Other students inoculate tobacco and tomato plants with different viruses to become familiar with symptoms and learn about disease resistance.

William Mitchell grows weeds in the greenhouse to teach turfgrass management students the difference between Kentucky bluegrass and crabgrass. Paul Burbutis uses the greenhouse to

grow host plants for insects discussed in his entomology classes

Maintaining healthy plants among the weeds, insects and diseases keeps Dennison's job challenging. He takes great pains to control the potential hazards, watering diseased plants with extreme care so that none of the water splashes healthy plants and infects them. He's also especially cautious about insects when Carroll works with viruses because aphids could spread disease throughout the greenhouse. He sterilizes all pots and tools that come in contact with diseased plants. The greenhouse contains a steam unit in which he pasteurizes infected soil and plant material before composting them.

Dennison gets requests for plants that commercial greenhouse operators rarely see. For example, field mustard is neither decorative nor tasty, but it reproduces more quickly than most other plants, and produces interesting, easy-to-spot genetic mutations. Dr. James Hawk's genetics students often use it for plant breeding experiments.

Hawk's graduate students also conduct corn breeding experiments in the greenhouse, while other researchers work there on soybean disease control, control of corn borers, and similar problems of importance to agriculture.

On the horticultural side, Charles Dunham finds the greenhouse handy to grow blooms for his flower arranging class. Annual plants are also started there and transplanted by Dennison to the gardens around Agricultural Hall, where Dr. Richard Lighty's students study them early in the fall semester to see how their colors and textures combine in a garden.

Extension 4-H agents Jim Moore and Mark Manno use the greenhouse classroom occasionally to teach 4-H club members how to force bulbs,

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arrange flowers, and make wreaths and corsages. Dunham opens the classroom to FFA members from around the state for similar activities, as well as plant identification contests.

In addition to the plant sale, other Ag Day activities are aimed at families. There will be a children's pet show, pony rides, greenhouse and farm tours, crafts, exhibits, farm animals, a square

dancing demonstration, and a chicken barbecue dinner.

The event is free and open to the public. Tickets to the barbecue dinner will be available at the door.



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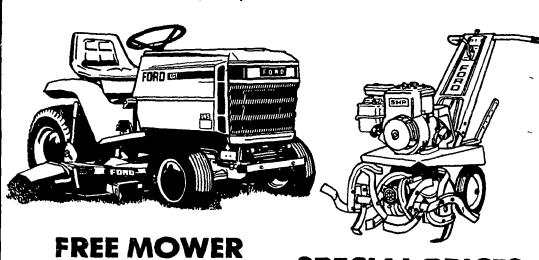
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