Ornamental Plant Germplasm Center Has New Director, Curator

COLUMBUS, Ohio — The Ohio State University Ornamental Plant Germplasm Center has a new director and curator to head up its staff.

David Tay, an internationally recognized leader in germplasm management, has been hired as the permanent director of the facility, succeeding interim director Jim Corfield.

Susan Stieve, a well-known breeder of African violets, has been appointed curator of the center.

"David brings the right blend of academic training, hands-on-knowledge of germplasm conservation, people skills, business skills and international exposure to help our center move quickly to become a world center for plant research," Corfield said.

Tay will be responsible for creating strategies, goals and objectives that the center will then fulfill through its activities. Germplasm acquisition, characterization, conservation, management and distribution are all central functions of the center. He has already devoted considerable time to creating a plan outline that will address what the research and commercial customers might expect from the center and how it can be best organized to meet those needs.

Tay brings more than 25 years of experience in germplasm work including plant breeding, taxonomy, seed production and enterprise management. Most recently, he has served as director of the Australian Seed and Propagation Technology Centre at the University of Queensland since 1995. He has worked with World Bank, FAO, the International Potato Center in Peru and as Head / Genebank Manager for the Asian Vegetable Research and Development Center in Taiwan.

Tay received his master's and doctorate degrees from the University of Birmingham in England and his undergraduate degree from the University of Malaya.

Susan Stieve, who has a solid background in breeding research that includes African violets, has been appointed curator of the center. She leaves her work as a plant breeder for Green Circle Growers and trial manager for Express Seed Company in Oberlin, Ohio, to accept the position.

"Susan knows ornamental plants as a breeder, a grower and as an innovator of new genetics. These are just the qualities we're looking for at the center," said Corfield.

In her breeding work, Stieve bred and selected 13 African violet cultivars that are in commercial production in North and South Americas, Europe and Australia.

Additional breeding research was conducted on more than a dozen other genera.

Stieve has a solid background in trial design, management and evaluation and has provided technical crop production assistance to growers throughout the country. She has been responsible for all aspects of operating a complex greenhouse and field operation that will serve her well in her capacity as curator. She will have day-to-day responsibility for maintaining germplasm collections at the center in addition to being a vital part of the team that locates, acquires and characterizes this germplasm.

Stieve earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in horticulture at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and completed virtually all of her doctorate work there before moving into private industry in Ohio in 1994.

The Ornamental Plant Germplasm Center is the first focused effort by the USDA's National Plant Germplasm System to manage germplasm of herbaceous ornamental plants. The germplasm, including seeds, bulbs, shoot tips and other living tissue, will be housed in facilities adjacent to the Department of Horticulture and Crop Science on main campus. Ohio State University's College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences finalized a cooperative agreement with USDA in the summer of 1999 creating the center as a joint research venture.

Cabbage Research Development Program Awards $35,400 For 2001

GENEVA, N.Y. — Michael Riner, president of the New York State Cabbage Research and Development Program's advisory board, announced $35,400 in funding for eight cabbage research proposals during the New York State Vegetable Conference in Syracuse, in early February.

"The proposed research projects were excellent," he said. He announced that the R&D assessment would increase to $3/acre in 2001.

"The Empire State ranks first in total cabbage acreage in the U.S., which includes fresh market and kraut cabbage," said Cornell University vegetable horticulturist Stephen Reiners, who works at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva. New York's 2000 cabbage crop was worth more than $80 million.

The Cabbage Research & Development Program Advisory Board met Feb. 8 at the Experiment Station to consider the cabbage research proposals they would fund with the money they raised under the $2.50/acre Research & Development fund assessment in 2000. Last year was the first season the assessment was in effect.

Nine research proposals were received, requesting $60,000 in funds. Among them were proposals from Cornell University researchers Helene Dillard, Phil Griffiths, Tony Shelton, Lisa Earle, John Roberts, Steve Reiners, Al Taylor, and others.

Projects funded included research in weed management, controlling alternaria leaf spot, breeding improved varieties, controlling pests such as Diamondback moth and cabbage maggots, the effects of hot water treatments on cabbage seed quality, processing, and storage.

"Cabbage usually ranks near potatoes and onions in value among vegetables in New York," said Reiners. "Since it is important to such a large segment of the industry, cabbage researchers at Cornell need to keep the industry up to date on all aspects of production-pest management, culture, post harvest, etc. The industry usually wants to see research on topics that will benefit them in the short term-things like how they'll control thrips or rot next year, or what they can use to control weeds."