Meet Me in Orlando – Part Two

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You might remember in my last “Reflections” (of course you remember), I wrote about some of my Annual Conference experiences, and encouraged you to become involved and submit an Abstract for the 2020 Annual Conference (August 9-13, at the Rosen Plaza Hotel, Orlando, Florida). Here I need to remind you that Abstracts are due March 15, 2020 (https://ashs.confex.com/ashs/2020/cfp.cgi). I strongly encourage you to get involved. This is also on my mind, and let me assure you that even though I am the President, I still submit an abstract just like everyone else. After consulting with my Lab Manager and one of my Technicians, I believe my group will be submitting three abstracts this year. At this time, our most difficult decision is whether screening germplasm for salt tolerance will fit best under Genetics and Germplasm or Ecological Physiology.

Again, in my last column, I thought in Part Two I was going to discuss the process by which we read, evaluate, and place Abstracts into the program. However, after spending time reflecting on our keynote speakers, and one new session at this Annual Conference, I decided these would be my topics. Spoiler alert, you may see, Meet Me in Orlando – Part Three.

New cultivars are important to everyone from basic scientists to Extension personnel working with growers, and of course our industry members and partners. Because of this, an idea came from the membership for a session highlighting new cultivar releases. At this time, the format is not decided, but some ideas include: 1) an oral session, something like the Scholars Ignite Lightning Talks with one slide and 3 minutes max to discuss what is interesting and unique about the new cultivar. 2) A special poster session just for cultivar releases; even 3) have a “Cultivar Corner” where there are handouts (release flyers), and perhaps a concurrent set of lightning talks. Although not this year, we ultimately hope to have prizes for the most exciting presentation or the most interesting new cultivar. Margaret Worthington (University of Arkansas and Chair of the Fruit Breeding Professional Interest Group) has graciously agreed to lead the session (in whatever format) this summer.

You also, of course, remember my previous “Reflections” where I discussed “The Future of Hemp.” Hemp research is very exciting right now, and ASHS is right at the forefront of this hemp resurgence. Jay Noller, the Director of the Oregon State University, Global Hemp Innovation Center (https://agsci.oregonstate.edu/hemp), will give one of our keynote talks. Dr. Noller is a global leader in hemp research. He will give us his insights into past and present efforts, the importance of interdisciplinary teams, and potential research and its implications. ASHS’s newest Professional Interest Group is Hemp Research and Extension (chaired by Scott Lukas of Oregon State University). The Hemp Research and Extension Professional Interest Group provides a forum to share recent advances, challenges, and future directions in the research and outreach of this swiftly expanding crop. They are currently soliciting presentations for a hemp special session at the 2020 Annual Conference in Orlando, and if interested please
contact Dr. Lukas for more information. Here I might remind you that if your Professional Interest Group is looking to develop a Workshop (https://ashs.confex.com/ashs/2020/cfp.cgi), the due date for Workshops is March 1, 2020. This is a hard due date since Workshops are evaluated, accepted, and placed in sessions before oral and poster session abstracts are evaluated.

We can change lives by diversifying what we grow and what we eat. Vegetable production is extremely important in improving health by providing essential micronutrients lacking in diets, creating jobs, giving people new sources of income, and improving the sustainability of food production. We are very excited to have two keynote speakers addressing vegetable production both worldwide and domestically. Marco Wopereis is the Director General of the World Vegetable Center (https://avrdc.org/). As an aside, it took me over a month to talk to Dr. Wopereis since he was traveling and working in Asia. Dr. Wopereis will be talking about innovations in vegetable food systems for healthier diets, focusing on low- and middle-income countries. Jenn Frymark is the Chief Greenhouse Officer for Gotham Greens (https://www.gothamgreens.com/). Gotham Greens grows fresh produce in urban areas by building and operating sustainable greenhouses in cities across America. They grow local produce year round, and in so doing help revitalize these communities. Ms. Frymark will be discussing opportunities and challenges in urban agriculture. I am very happy to have her Frymark with us since Gotham Greens was at the forefront of the urban agriculture effort, but also because she did her graduate work at the University of Arizona under the tutelage of Ursula Schuch.

Again, our featured topics and keynote speakers all came from suggestions from our membership, and two of our highly recommended Keynote speakers, are also ASHS members. Frank Louws (Horticulture Science, NC State University) is an acclaimed Plant Pathologist. His talk will emphasis how interdisciplinary synergies can advance plant health in horticultural systems. For this talk, he will draw from his experiences as Director of a highly interdisciplinary NSF-Center for Integrated Pest Management, and as a leader of a national team-based IPM program. Kevin Folta (Horticultural Sciences Department, University of Florida) will address the communication gap between scientists and the public. As he will explain, we do not need more graphs, tables, and data, but to better understand the psychological and sociological forces that shape consumer perceptions. The presentation will help us understand the mechanics of cognitive psychology, and to use that knowledge when connecting with the public. There will helpful hints on when and where to engage the public, as well as how to use these engagement opportunities for personal branding and career building.

As a plant breeder/geneticist, I am excited about the new session on cultivar releases. The more we understand about these new cultivars, the better decisions we will make when deciding which cultivars best meet our individual needs. The keynote speakers are an outstanding group. This is a group of acknowledged leaders in their individual areas, and they will present a diversity of topics important to horticulture. Their backgrounds are diverse, but they all address the importance of horticultural production. Our work as horticulturalists is important, and I encourage you to share with us your contributions, and join me at the 2020 Annual Conference in Orlando.