Punxsutawney Phil predicted six more weeks of winter. Those living in southern states could do with a whole lot less winter. Knoxville just experienced the greatest snowfall in one day since the great blizzard of 1993. Yet, at the same time many are experiencing winter storm after winter storm, others in the country are experiencing some of the worse drought conditions in years.

Environmental stress will impact horticultural crop production, plant utilization, landscapes, and industries. Our programs need to be able to help students, alumni, practitioners, producers, and others to solve the problems resulting from these extreme conditions. As Pi Alpha Xi recognizes excellence among our students and faculty, we need to remember that horticulture is application of the art and science to the growth of plants. We help our students develop critical thinking and problem solving skills to better face these and other challenges.

Besides the understanding of the science underpinning horticultural practices, we also deal with the art of horticulture. Don’t forget about the annual photography contest. There’s more information in this newsletter. Please promote this contest within your departments and encourage members and non-members alike to participate.

In case you missed it, Longwood Gardens, the American Society for Horticultural Science, the National Junior Horticulture Association, American Horticultural Society, American Public Gardens Association, and American Hort (the newly merged Ohio Florists’ Association and the American Nursery and Landscape Association) issued a white paper on the future of horticulture, lack of career awareness, and poor perception of the field. You can learn more about the National Horticultural Initiative for the United States on the ASHS website and download a copy of the white paper. This is something we all need to support.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank all of you for the good work you do with our chapters. The most meaningful thing we do is encourage students to stretch their expectations of themselves to reach even greater levels of achievement. And, for that, I thank you.

Now, if it would only stop snowing and raining, I might be able to continue my fall clean-up of the garden before the spring gets here!

Wishing each of you the best for the upcoming spring season,

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