

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE & LIFE SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF HORTICULTURAL SCIENCE



GRADUATION CELEBRATION CEREMONY

Duke Energy Hall
James B. Hunt Jr. Library
N.C. State University, Centennial Campus

December 12th, 2025

DEPARTMENT OF HORTICULTURAL SCIENCE

Processional, please stand

WELCOME..... Dr. Frank Louws

Department Head, Professor

SPECIAL GUEST..... Dr. Amy Grunden

*Co-Interim Associate Dean for Research and
Co-Interim Director of NC Agricultural Research Service*

AWARDING OF DEGREES

Ph.D., M.S., M.H.S.....Dr. Gina Fernandez

Director of Graduate Programs, Professor

B.S..... Mrs. Jodi Driedger

Director of Undergraduate Programs, Senior Lecturer

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Anju Pandey – Dr. Dilip Panthee (Chair)

Exploring a Novel Source of Resistance to Septoria Leaf Spot for Organic Tomato Production

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Chase Livengood (In Absentia) – Dr. Wusheng Liu and Dr. Tzung Fu Hsieh (Co-Chairs)

Functional Characterization of Maternally-expressed and Endosperm-specific Promoters in Tomato (Summer 2025)

Brooke Matusko – Dr. Emmanuel Torres (Chair)

Enhancing Bell Pepper Production: Exploring the Effects of AMF Application on Performance of Greenhouse Grown Bell Peppers

Stuart Michel (In Absentia) – Dr. Jonathan Schultheis (Chair)

Managing Fusarium Wilt of Watermelon with Cultivar Tolerance, Grafting, and Fungicides in North and South Carolina

MASTER OF SCIENCE (continued)

Justine Mulig (In Absentia) – Dr. Wusheng Liu (Chair)

Developing an Efficient Regeneration and Transformation System in *Triplidium* spp. for Gene Editing (Summer 2025)

Nyssa Ndey-Bongo (In Absentia) – Dr. Hudson Ashrafi (Chair)

Quantitative Trait Loci (QTL) Mapping of Phenology and Fruit-Quality Related Traits in an F1 ‘Liberty’ x ‘SpringHigh’ Blueberry Population (Summer 2025)

Gladys Njeri – Dr. Carlos Iglesias (Chair)

Genetic Diversity, Nutrition, and Adaptation of African Indigenous Leafy Vegetables in North Carolina

Alisha Ray (In Absentia) – Dr. Joe Neal (Chair)

Assessing the Presence and Management of Weed Seeds in Surface Irrigation Water of Container Production Nurseries

André Truter – Dr. Brian Jackson (Chair)

From Trees to Trays: The Science of Turning Wood into the Substrate of Tomorrow (Spring 2026)

Ingrid Tuyuc – Dr. Carlos Iglesias and Dr. Hsuan Chen (Co-Chairs)

Micropropagation of *Stevia rebaudiana*: Optimizing Shoot Multiplication and *Ex vitro* Rooting Establishment

MASTER OF HORTICULTURAL SCIENCE

Wright Lowery – Dr. Lucy Bradley (Chair)

Residential Landscape Design Solutions for Aging in Place (Summer 2025)

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN HORTICULTURAL SCIENCE

Dr. Brian Jackson (Advisor)

Taylor Carpenter

**Production Systems and
Entrepreneurship**

*Plant Biology

Madeline Kluttz

**Production Systems and
Entrepreneurship**

*Crop Science

Dr. Melinda Knuth (Advisor)

Morgan Benson

**Production Systems and
Entrepreneurship**

LeAnna Mintz

**Production Systems and
Entrepreneurship**

Dr. Ricardo Hernandez (Advisor)

Nico Bossey

Agroecology-Urban Horticulture

Ariana Phouangkeo

Agroecology-Urban Horticulture

Ms. Elisabeth Meyer (Advisor)

Olivia Briley

Plant Breeding and Biotechnology

*Biological Sciences

*Genetics

Cameron McAteer

Plant Breeding and Biotechnology

* denotes minor

Mrs. Jodi Driedger (Director of Undergraduate Programs/Advisor)

Brett Anderson
(Ms. Julie Sherk-Advisor)

**Landscape Design, Construction
and Management**

Noah Bradley
(Ms. Julie Sherk-Advisor)

**Landscape Design, Construction
and Management**

Erin Fitzsimmons

**Landscape Design, Construction
and Management**
**Landscape Architecture*

Cormac Holland

**Production Systems and
Entrepreneurship**

Shaeleigh Smith
(Julie Sherk-Advisor)

**Landscape Design, Construction
and Management**
**Plant Biology*
**Psychology*

Sophia Whalley

**Production Systems and
Entrepreneurship**

** denotes minor*

CERTIFICATE RECOGNITION
Undergraduate Certificate

Mr. Issac Lewis (Advisor)

Madison Patton

Jessica Powell

Graduate Certificate

Dr. Anthony LeBude (Advisor)

Mary Calkins (In Absentia)

AWARD: *Outstanding Senior*

CLOSING COMMENTS **Dr. Frank Louws**

Recessional, please stand

GRADUATION WITH HONORS

To be eligible for degree honor designations students must have completed at least two semesters and at least 30 credit hours at NC State University. Undergraduate degree honor designations are:

Cum Laude (white sash) – GPA 3.25 through 3.499

Magna Cum Laude (silver sash) – GPA 3.50 through 3.749

Summa Cum Laude (gold sash) – GPA 3.75 and above

PI ALPHA XI

The Iota Chapter of Pi Alpha Xi is the national Honor Society for Floriculture and Ornamental Horticulture. Pi Alpha Xi members graduating today are recognized by Cerulean blue and Nile green honor cords, the official colors of the organization.

The Department of Horticultural Science thanks the Iota Chapter of Pi Alpha Xi for their generous contribution to the graduation ceremony.

**Associate of Applied Science in
Horticultural Science Management**

Johnny Gaither

Small Scale Farming

Lydia Herring

**Ornamentals &
Landscape Technology**

John Macuga

**Ornamentals &
Landscape Technology**

Alex Medlin

**Ornamentals &
Landscape Technology**

Mahogany Turner

Small Scale Farming

**These students were recognized at the Agricultural Institute
Graduation Ceremony.*