Plant Sciences/Horticulture

Department Information

- **Department Head:**
  Richard Horsley, Ph.D.
- **Graduate Coordinator:**
  Edward Deckard, Ph.D.
- **Department Location:**
  166 Loftsgard Hall
- **Department Phone:**
  (701) 231-7971
- **Department Web Site:**
  www.ag.ndsu.edu/plantsciences/
- **Application Deadline:**
  International applications are due May 1 for Fall and October 15 for Spring. Domestic applicants should apply at least one month prior to the start of classes.
- **Credential Offered:**
  Ph.D. (Plant Sciences only), M.S.
- **Test Requirement:**
  GRE
- **English Proficiency Requirements:**
  TOEFL iBT 71, IELTS 6

Program Description

The Department of Plant Sciences offers graduate studies leading to the M.S. degrees in Cereal Science, Plant Sciences, and Horticulture, and to a Ph.D. degree in Cereal Science or Plant Sciences, with an optional Program of Emphasis in Plant Breeding and Genetics. Specialized academic and research training in Plant Sciences is available in plant breeding and genetics, weed science, biotechnology, and field and forage crop production and management. Areas of specialization in Horticulture and Forestry include breeding and genetics, biotechnology, physiology, propagation, sports and urban turfgrass management, and production and management of horticultural crops such as woody plants, potatoes, vegetables, and herbaceous ornamentals. Areas of specialization in Cereal Science may involve research in the areas of carbohydrates, enzymes, legumes, and other northern-grown crops; barley malting and brewing; wheat milling, baking, and pasta processing. Each study area is designed to provide students with comprehension of the discipline and of relevant regional and global-community social issues.

The Department of Plant Sciences is located in Loftsgard Hall, which provides a state-of-the-art facility for interdisciplinary research in plant sciences, ranging from basic studies and biotechnology to the more traditional applied areas. Facilities for cereal science research are located in Harris Hall. These facilities include analytical laboratories for grain quality research, baking, milling, malting and brewing, and pasta and noodle processing. State-of-the-art greenhouses and extensive growth chamber facilities are also available, as are 100 acres of field research land adjacent to the Plant Science Complex. An additional 500 acres of research land are located near the North Dakota State University campus. A horticultural farm only 25 miles west of campus has an extensive arboretum. Excellent supporting disciplines located nearby, or in the Plant Science Complex, include Soil Science, Botany, Food Safety, Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, Entomology, and Plant Pathology. The Department of Plant Sciences encourages interdisciplinary research, and students frequently tailor their research program to meet their interests by working with faculty in one or more of the supporting disciplines.

Graduate student numbers per faculty member are limited, so the student gets adequate personal attention and works closely with their adviser in research. Final selection of the adviser will be made on the basis of the student’s interest, availability of space in the researcher’s laboratory, and a common desire of the student and professor to work together.

The Department of Plant Sciences graduate programs are open to all qualified graduates of universities and colleges of recognized standing. To be admitted with full status to the program, the applicant must meet Graduate School admission requirements.

Students who do not meet all requirements for admission, but show potential for successful graduate study, may be admitted under a conditional status. Evidence must be provided showing that the applicant’s potential is not adequately reflected by their record.

Financial Assistance

Graduate research assistantships (half-time) are provided on a competitive basis based on scholarship and potential to undertake advanced study and research. The information provided within the application to Graduate School is used to assign available assistantships to applicants. Currently, the...
Annual stipend is $17,340 for a M.S. candidate and $18,560 for a Ph.D. candidate but this may vary based on the research project. Graduate tuition is waived for all students with a graduate research assistantship.

A limited number of graduate fellowships are available. The Department of Plant Sciences has numerous annual scholarships of $500 to $1,000 each for outstanding Plant Sciences graduate students.

**Degree Programs**

The M.S. Program, Thesis Option, requires completion of at least 30 credits; this includes 10 credits of thesis research (PLSC 798).

The Ph.D. Program requires completion of at least 90 credits; this includes 30 credits for an earned M.S. degree (Thesis Option), 2 credits from two teaching experiences (PLSC 892), 2 additional credits of seminar (PLSC 790), and 20 additional research credits (PLSC 899). An optional Ph.D. Program of Emphasis in Plant Breeding and Genetics is available with additional course requirements as mentioned on the departmental website.

For each M.S. or Ph.D. candidate, a plan of study will be developed in the first year that meets the disciplinary requirements as well as the individual needs of the student. The faculty adviser and other members of the student’s supervisory/advisory and examining committee assist in developing of the plan of study as well as the student’s research plan. Candidates for the M.S. degree programs normally satisfy all requirements within a two-year period. Ph.D. candidates normally require three additional years. For M.S. candidates, an oral examination of academics related to the discipline and the research-based thesis is required. The Ph.D. candidates are required to pass a preliminary written and oral examination of academics related to the discipline and a final oral defense of a research-based dissertation.

An M.S. Program, Comprehensive Study Option, is also offered in Plant Sciences. This option requires completion of at least 30 credits, including 3 credits of a Master’s Paper (PLSC 797).

A B.S. to Ph.D. program is permitted for students who meet higher admission requirements.

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**Faculty**

**Nonoy Bandillo, Ph.D.**  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2016  
Research Interests: Pulse Breeding, Genetics

**Marisol Berti, Ph.D.**  
North Dakota State University, 2007  
Research Interests: Forage and Biomass Crop Production

**Xiwen Cai, Ph.D.**  
Washington State University, 1998  
Research Interests: Wheat Genetics

**Bingcan Chen, Ph.D.**  
University of Massachusetts, 2012  
Research Interests: Cereal and Food Chemistry

**Michael J. Christoffers, Ph.D.**  
University of Missouri-Columbia, 1998  
Research Interests: Weed Science/Genetics

**David Wenhao Dai, Ph.D.**  
North Dakota State University, 2001
Research Interests: Woody Plant Physiology, Biotechnology

Edward L. Deckard, Ph.D.
University of Illinois, 1970
Research Interests: Crop Physiology

Elias M. Elias, Ph.D.
North Dakota State University, 1987
Research Interests: Durum Wheat Breeding, Genetics

Kenneth F. Grafton, Ph.D.
University of Missouri, 1980
Research Interests: Dry Bean Breeding, Genetics

Greta Gramig, Ph.D.
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Research Interests: Weed Biology and Ecology

Andrew J. Green, Ph.D.
Kansas State University, 2016
Research Interests: Hard Red Spring Wheat, Genetics

Harlene Hatterman-Valenti, Ph.D.
Iowa State University, 1993
Research Interests: High-Value Crop Production

Theodore C. Helms, Ph.D.
Iowa State University, 1986
Research Interests: Soybean Breeding, Genetics

Richard D. Horsley, Ph.D.
North Dakota State University, 1988
Research Interests: Barley Breeding, Genetics

Kirk A. Howatt, Ph.D.
Colorado State University, 1999
Research Interests: Weed Science, Annual Weeds

Joseph Ikley, Ph.D.
Purdue University, 2018
Research Interests: Weed Control

Burton L. Johnson, Ph.D.
North Dakota State University, 1993
Research Interests: Crop Production

Thomas J. Kalb, Ph.D.
Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, 1988
Research Interests: Extension Horticulture

Herman J. Kandel, Ph.D.
North Dakota State University, 1995
Research Interests: Crop Production

Chiwon W. Lee, Ph.D.
Purdue University, 1977
Research Interests: Vegetables, Floriculture, Biotechnology

Deying M. Li, Ph.D.
Iowa State University, 2001
Research Interests: Sports Turf Management

Xuehui Li, Ph.D.
University of Georgia, 2009
Research Interests: Statistical Genomics
Frank A. Manthey, Ph.D.
North Dakota State University, 1985
Research Interests: Durum Wheat Quality, Pasta/Noodle Processing

G. Francois Marais, Ph.D.
North Dakota State University, 1979
University of Stellenbosch, 1992
Research Interests: Hard Red Winter Wheat Breeding, Genetics

Phillip E. McClean, Ph.D.
Colorado State University, 1982
Research Interests: Dry Bean Genetics, Biotechnology

Esther E. McGinnis
University of Minnesota, 2013
Research Interests: Extension Horticulture, Native Plants, Perennial Hardiness, Floriculture

Michael S. McMullen, Ph.D.
University of Minnesota, 1976
Research Interests: Oat Breeding, Genetics

Rebekah Oliver, Ph.D.
North Dakota State University, 2006
Research Interests: Genetics

Juan Osorno, Ph.D.
North Dakota State University, 2006
Research Interests: Dry Edible Bean Breeding

Thomas Peters, Ph.D.
North Dakota State University, 1990
Research Interests: Sugarbeet Agronomy, Weed Science

Mukhlesur Rahman, Ph.D.
University of Manitoba, 2007
Research Interests: Canola Breeding

Joel K. Ransom, Ph.D.
University of Minnesota, 1982
Research Interests: Small Grains

Jiajia Rao, Ph.D.
University of Massachusetts, 2013
Research Interests: Food Chemistry, Ingredient Technology

Andy Robinson, Ph.D.
Purdue University, 2012
Research Interests: Potato Production

Paul B. Schwarz, Ph.D.
North Dakota State University, 1987
Research Interests: Malting Barley Quality

Kalidas Shetty, Ph.D.
University of Idaho, 1989
Research Interests: Food Safety

Senay Simsek, Ph.D.
Purdue University, 2006
Research Interests: Hard Spring Wheat Quality

Asunta L. Thompson, Ph.D.
University of Idaho, 1998
Research Interests: Potato Breeding

Anuradha Vegi, Ph.D.
North Dakota State University, 2008
Research Interests: Teaching Techniques

Todd West, Ph.D.
Southern Illinois University, 2004
Research Interests: Woody Plant Improvement

Qi Zhang, Ph.D.
Kansas State University, 2007
Research Interests: Turfgrass Stress Physiology

Alan J. Zuk, Ph.D.
Kansas State University, 2005
Research Interests: Sports and Urban Turfgrass Management

Adjunct and Affiliate

James V. Anderson, Ph.D.
Virginia Polytech Institute, 1990
Research Interests: Plant Biochemistry

James Beaver, Ph.D.
University of Illinois, 1980
Research Interests: Dry Bean Genetics

David Bonnett, Ph.D.
University of Sydney, 1997
Research Interests: Wheat Breeding

Patrick M. Carr, Ph.D.
Montana State University, 1989
Research Interests: Sustainable Agriculture

Wun Shaw Chao, Ph.D.
University of California-Davis, 1996
Research Interests: Perennial Weeds

Linda Dykes, Ph.D.
Texas A&M University, 2008
Research Interests: Food Science and Technology

Justin D. Faris, Ph.D.
Kansas State University, 1999
Research Interests: Wheat Molecular Genetics

Jason Fiedler, Ph.D.
Scripps Research Institute, 2012
Research Interests: Cereal Crop Genetics

Shana M. Forster, Ph.D.
North Dakota State University, 2017
Research Interests: Crop Production

Jose G. Franco, Jr., Ph.D.
Texas A&M University, 2015
Research Interests: Agroecology, Sustainable Food Systems

Karen L. Fugate, Ph.D.
Ohio State University, 1995
Research Interests: Sugarbeet Physiology

Russell Gesch, Ph.D.
Texas A&M University, 1995
Research Interests: Physiology of Oilseed Crops

Michael Grusak, Ph.D.
University of California-Davis, 1985  
Research Interests: Crop Nutrient Quality

**Darrin Haagenson, Ph.D.**  
Purdue University, 2001  
Research Interests: Crop Physiology and Ecology

**David P. Horvath, Ph.D.**  
Michigan State University, 1993  
Research Interests: Perennial Weed Physiology

**Brent Hulke, Ph.D.**  
University of Minnesota, 2007  
Research Interests: Flax and Sunflower Genetics

**Brian Jenks, Ph.D.**  
University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 1996  
Research Interests: Integrated Weed Management

**Blaine Johnson, Ph.D.**  
University of Nebraska, 1986  
Research Interests: Quantitative Genetics

**Edward C. Lulai, Ph.D.**  
North Dakota State University, 1978  
Research Interests: Potato Physiology

**Kevin McPhee, Ph.D.**  
University of Idaho, 1995  
Research Interests: Pulse Crops

**Grant Mehring, Ph.D.**  
North Dakota State University, 2016  
Research Interests: Agronomy; Wheat and Corn Research

**Mohamed Mergoum, Ph.D.**  
Colorado State University, 1991  
Research Interests: Hard Red Spring Wheat Breeding

**Jae-Bom Ohm, Ph.D.**  
Kansas State University, 1996  
Research Interests: Grain Science

**Michael Ostlie, Ph.D.**  
Colorado State University, 2012  
Research Interests: Weed Science

**Timothy Porch, Ph.D.**  
Cornell University, 2012  
Research Interests: Dry Bean Breeding and Genetics

**Gautam Pradhan, Ph.D.**  
Kansas State University, 2011  
Research Interests: Crop Physiology

**Lili Qi, Ph.D.**  
Nanjing Agricultural University, 1997  
Research Interests: Wheat Genetics

**Calvin Trostle, Ph.D.**  
Texas A&M, 1996  
Research Interests: Row Crops, Peanut, Alfalfa

**Gerald J. Seiler, Ph.D.**  
North Dakota State University, 1980
Research Interests: Sunflower and Sugarbeet Germplasm

**Thomas Walk, Ph.D.**
Pennsylvania State University, 2005
Research Interests: Plant Physiology, Statistics

**Jochum Wiersma, Ph.D.**
University of Minnesota, 1995
Research Interests: Small Grains

**Steven S. Xu, Ph.D.**
North Dakota State University, 1994
Research Interests: Hard Red Spring Wheat Development

**Shengming Yang, Ph.D.**
North Dakota State University, 1994
Research Interests: Hard Red Spring Wheat Development