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Cornell graduate student receives Perrine Scholarship

By Joe Ogradnick

Geneva, NY: Andrea Burke, a first-year Cornell doctoral student, has been named the recipient of the 2007 Perrine Scholarship. The scholarship was established in 1993 by David Perrine, Cornell class of 1922, to support pomology research at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva, N.Y.

"Andrea has a strong background in both horticulture and plant breeding," said Susan Brown, the Herman M. Cohn Professor of Horticultural Sciences. "Her enthusiasm for research and learning appears to be limitless."

Burke will work with Brown on research to improve the health benefits of apples and, in a second project, to reduce browning of the apple flesh.

"There is a wide range of variation for vitamin C and other antioxidants, such as quercetin," said Brown. "Research by CY Lee, Cornell professor of food science and technology, and others has proven the health benefits of these antioxidants. Understanding how much variation exists for these traits and how they are inherited will allow us to breed apples with enhanced nutrition."

Brown also pointed out that reducing flesh browning would be an important attribute for the ever-expanding market for fresh-cut apples. "Packages of fresh-cut apples are currently available at fast-food chains, and there are plans to make them available for school lunches," she said. "Naturally non-browning apples would be ideal for this purpose. Developing molecular markers for these traits is a goal."

David Perrine, who established the gift in memory of his wife, Fanny French Perrine, was a prominent orchardist from Centralia, Ill. The Perrines met as students at Cornell in the 1920s. Mrs. Perrine ran many of the farm's activities and was deeply involved in community activities.

"I was very happily surprised to learn that I had received this award," Burke said. "I feel very honored."

Looking to the future, Burke said that she would like to work in research in plant breeding. "I like the idea of making the world a better place, one apple at a time," she said.

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Susan Brown (left) and Andrea Burke.
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