

# 2026 Pre-Conference Newsletter



## Southern Region

 Parent Society
American Society for Horticultural Science
 Member SAAS

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**2026 Annual Conference**  
**January 30-February 1, 2026**  
**Louisville, KY**

**91<sup>st</sup> Year**  
**Southern Region**  
**American Society for Horticultural**  
**Science**

**107<sup>th</sup> Year**  
**Horticulture Section**  
**Southern Association of Agricultural**  
**Scientists**

**About the Louisville Meetings**  
 SR-ASHS will meet in conjunction with the Southern Association of Agricultural Scientist (SAAS) in Louisville, KY at the Omni Louisville.

- Tentative Program Schedule**
- The general schedule of the meetings will be:
- Friday**
- ACB Club Share and tour
  - Working Group Meetings
  - Ornamental Working
  - HORT Administrator Meetings
  - SRASHS Executive Committee Meeting
  - National ASHS Board of Directors Meeting
- Saturday**
- Poster session viewing and judging
  - ACB judging contest
  - Working Group Meetings
  - Extension, Education & overflow Sections
  - Edmund, Childers, Barham, and Poster Judging competitions
- Sunday**
- ACB Business meeting & officer election
  - Fruit, Vegetable, Floriculture and Ornamental Horticulture and Postharvest Commodity Section meetings.
  - Business Meeting
  - SAAS Board and General Meeting
  - SAAS Social and Reception
- Full Tentative Schedule at the end of the Newsletter.

**Organizational Meeting**  
**Possible Creation of an Ornamentals Working Group**

Mike Schnelle, Oklahoma State Univ, has requested an organizational meeting to discuss creation of an Ornamental Working Group. There will be several speakers on *Underutilized Plant Materials for the Ornamentals Industry*, then a business meeting to gauge interest in forming a formal Ornamental Working Group. The session is Friday afternoon.

## Pre-Registration and Registration Information

The cost of Registration is:

\$175 Members, Faculty, and Industry

\$60 Graduate student

\$20 Undergraduate student

\$20 ACB Club registration.

Pre-registration online prior to the meeting and registration at the meeting are the same rate. Pre-registration is fully refunded if you cancel at any time and for any reason. Therefore, everyone is **strongly encouraged** to pre-register online. If you pre-register online, cancellation refunds will be credited to your credit card.

### Pre-Registration Online (Strongly encouraged)

**Deadline:** Prior to and through the meeting.

Go to the following URL to access the Southern Region ASHS Registration Site on the ASHS website.

<https://ashs.org/events/EventDetails.aspx?id=1990179>

Note: If you are not an ASHS Member, select Continue as Guest.

We would like to thank Tracy Shawn, Tess Moore and ASHS Headquarters for supplying the online registration service and managing abstract publication.

### Registration at the Meeting

On-site registration will be available at the registration desk.

**Payment:** Check (personal, institutional, organization, foundation) or cash.  
Credit card only by online registration.

### Southern Region Dues and Membership

2025 dues can be paid through the ASHS web site. Southern Region-ASHS membership is separate from ASHS membership. If you want to pay dues and join the Southern Region-ASHS go to:

<https://ashs.org/store/ListProducts.aspx?catid=294320>

If you are an ASHS member, you can pay your SR-ASHS with your National membership. If absolutely necessary, dues can also be paid at the annual meetings. 2025 dues are \$30. Notice: Dues must be paid to vote, to be elected to an office or to receive an award.

## Hotel Information and Reservations

(Book early - rooms often run out if you wait too late. You can always cancel.)

### Omni Louisville Hotel

400 S 2nd St.,

Louisville, KY 40202

### FOR LODGING RESERVATIONS

Phone: Call 800-843-6664 and be sure to ask for the Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists group rate. You can also say SAAS group rate.

Online: Use the following link

[2026 SAAS Conference.](#)

Make sure you change dates on the Omni's reservations opening page to the dates you need, otherwise it may say selected rooms are unavailable.

### Deadline to reserve at group rate:

SAAS Group Rates good through Tuesday, January 16, 2026: \$194/+ tax double/single/triple/quad rooms

Check in: 3:00 pm

Check out: 11:00 am

### HOTEL PARKING:

All parking at the hotel is conducted by valet only. The current overnight rate is \$45.00 plus tax per vehicle per night. Rates are subject to change without notice.

### THE OMNI HOTEL AMENITIES:

Group Rate will be honored for extended stay from Monday, January 26, 2026 through Saturday, February 7, 2026 if available.

- Internet: Complimentary internet in guestrooms for Omni Select Guest Registration: Select Guest Loyalty Program for information and to enroll.
- Fitness Center: Complimentary access to hotel's fitness center

### Louisville Airport Information

<https://www.flylouisville.com/>

### Things to do in Louisville

<https://www.gotolouisville.com/things-to-do/>

### “New” SRASHS Web Site

New and modernized website courtesy of Tracy Shawn and Jane Cerza at ASHS Headquarters

<https://srashs.org/>

### SAAS Web Site

<https://www.saasinc.org/>

Will post updates relative to hotel availability and meeting information.

### Future Meetings Sites

2027 – Oklahoma City, OK

2028 – Birmingham, AL

## Instructions to Presenters

### Oral Paper Presentation Format:

Presenters must bring their presentation(s) as a PowerPoint presentation saved on a USB memory device. Contact Chair if you want to email your presentation. It is advisable to bring your presentation on at least two storage devices for redundancy. If you would like to bring your presentation on any other storage form, check with the Chair ahead of time to make sure their computer will accept that form.

### Poster Preparation Instructions

**Size, Format and Font.** Poster presentations must fit with a 48" x 48" size. Abstract titles, names, and affiliations should appear on the top of the poster. A simple sans serif-face font (e.g., Helvetica) should be used. Lettering for the title should be at least one inch tall. Lettering for text and illustrations should range in size between 6 mm and 12 mm. The authors' names and affiliations may be somewhat smaller. Authors are urged to include photographs to assist in author identification.

**Content.** Do not prepare a poster as if it were a manuscript. Primarily, use tables and figures and use limited verbiage. Details of the work can be provided in discussions with interested parties.

**Display.** Mount your poster on the poster board that has the same number as your title in the program. Pushpins or Velcro buttons may be used to hang posters. Pins/Velcro must be supplied by presenter—they will not be available on-site.

**Poster Competition.** Undergraduate and graduate students wishing to participate in the poster judging competition should indicate their intent to the Chair of the Poster Section when they submit their poster title. Limited numbers may be accepted at the meeting, check with the registration table.

### Abstract Preparation Instructions:

In order to publish abstracts: 1) one of the authors must be registered for the SRASHS conference (or one of the other SAAS groups), 2) the paper or poster must be presented in a conference session, and 3) the title must appear in the Conference Program. Prepare abstracts according to the "Instructions for Submission of Abstracts for Publication by ASHS" form at the end of the Newsletter. Each abstract must be submitted as a separate Word (.doc or .docx) file. If you use another word processing language, save, and submit the abstract as a rich text format

(.rtf) file. Email your abstract to the Chair before the meeting or you may submit the abstract in a file format to the Chair at the meeting. The Chair may give a few days grace period to send the abstract by email after the meeting. To be published, all abstracts must be formatted properly.

### Double Presentations

Students cannot present an oral talk or poster in the competition, and also present the same in a commodity section. Working Groups may allow double presentations, consult the Chair.

## Instructions to Section Chairs and Judges

### Section Chairs:

**The Section Chairs are responsible for bringing a laptop computer and projector for their Section.**

If this is a problem, there will be one or two projectors that can be checked-out at the registration desk – first come first serve.

### Judges:

**ACB Advisor:** Arranges judges for the J. Benton Storey Judging Contest.

**Collegiate Branch Section Chair:** Arranges judges for the Edmund Undergraduate oral presentations.

**Poster Section Chair:** Arranges judges for the undergraduate and graduate Poster judging.

**President-Elect:** Arranges judges for the Childers Masters and Barham PhD graduate oral presentations.

### Chairs collect abstracts:

All Chairs collect abstracts at the meeting or give the presenters a few days to submit abstracts to the Chair by email. The Chair emails abstracts to National ASHS Headquarters by mid-February; contact person and email address TBA. In order for an abstract to be published:

- The abstract title must appear in the Conference Program.
- The paper must have been presented orally or as a poster at the meeting. "No shows" are not published.
- One of the authors must be registered for the conference (Horticulture or any other SAAS section).
- The abstract must be formatted properly.

## 2025-2026 Officers, Chairs and Committee Members

<b>2025-26 Officers, Chairs and Committees</b>		
(Term of office is from end of 2025 meeting through 2026 meeting)		
<b>Officers</b>		
President	Sarah White	swhite4@clemsun.edu
President-Elect	Jeb Fields	jsfields@ufl.edu
President-Elect-Elect	to be elected Fall 25	
Secretary-Treasurer	David Wm. Reed Cheryl Boyer	dwreed07@gmail.com or dwreed@tamu.edu crboyer@ksu.edu
<b>Executive Committee</b>		
Previous Chair	Julie Campbell	julie.campbell@uga.edu
Previous Vice-Chair	Chris Gunter	cc.gunter@ufl.edu
Chair	Cheryl Boyer	crboyer@ksu.edu
Vice-Chair	Daniel Wells	wellsda@auburn.edu
Member	Heather Kirk-Ballard	hkirkballard@agcenter.lsu.edu
Member	Patricia Knight	patricia.knight@msstate.edu
Member	to be elected Fall 25	
Member	to be elected Fall 25	
Member, President-Elect	Sarah White	swhite4@clemsun.edu
<b>Nominations Committee</b>		
Chair, Senior Retired President	Elina Coneva	edc0001@auburn.edu
Member, Immediate Past President	Christine Coker	christine.coker@msstate.edu
Member	Amanda McWhirt	amcwhirt@uada.edu
Member	Andre da Silva	adasilva@auburn.edu
Member	to be appointed	
Member	to be appointed	
<b>ACB Officers</b>		
President	Aidan Souder	aidansouder@tamu.edu
Vice President	Tristen Taylor	trcsten@tamu.edu
Secretary	Ananiah Barbee	ananiah.barbee@siu.edu
Treasurer	Jack Huckaby	jhuck000@gmail.com
Social Chair	Corrin Heilig	corrinh18@gmail.com
Recruitment Chair	Cecilia Acosto Lopez	cecilia.acostalopez@siu.edu
ACB Representative	Trishia Nyugen	trishiiia@tamu.edu
Advisor	Gerald Burgner	gsburgner@tamu.edu
<b>Section Chairs</b>		
Education Section	Lorenzo Rosi	l.rossi@tamu.edu
Extension Section	Kathryn Fontenot	kkfontenot@agcenter.lsu.edu
Floriculture, Ornamentals and Turf Section	Andrew KIng	andrew.king@ag.tamu.edu
Fruit Crops Section	Renee Threlfall	rthrelf@uark.edu
Postharvest/Biotechnology Section	Marlee Trandel-Hayse	mat0141@auburn.edu
Vegetables Crops Section	Timothy Coolong	tcoolong@uga.edu
Poster Section	Anthony Bowden	abowden@uada.edu
Edmond UG Comp. - Collegiate Branch	Kaitlin Hopkins	kah147@shsu.edu
Childers and Barham Grad Competition	Jeb Fields	jsfields@ufl.edu

<b>Working Groups Chairs</b>			
Horticultural Administrators		Amit Dingra	amit.dhingra@ag.tamu.edu
National Sweet Potato Collaborators		Tristan Watson	twatson@agcenter.lsu.edu
Southern Fruit Workers	Co-Chair	Amanda McWhirt	amcwhirt@uada.edu
	Co-Chair	Zilfina Rubio Ames	zilfina.rubioames@uga.edu
Watermelon Research Group	Chair	Brian Ward	bw@clemson.edu
	Vice-Chair	Melissa Acevedo	melissa.acevedo@hmclosure.com
<b>Awards Committees</b>			
Miller Distinguished Educator	Chair	Carolyn Robinson	cwr0001@auburn.edu
	Member	Bruce Dunn	bruce.dunn@okstate.edu
	Member	Catherine Simson	catherine.simpson@ttu.edu
Miller Distinguished Researcher	Chair	Kevin Crosby	kevincrosby210@hotmail.com
	Member	Daniel Leskovar	d-leskovar@tamu.edu
	Member	John Ruter	ruter@uga.edu
Covington Extension Award	Chair	Mark Hoffman	mark.hoffmann@ncsu.edu
	Member	Cheryl Boyer	crboyer@ksu.edu
	Member	Tim Coolong	tcoolong@uga.edu
Hutchison Young Extension	Chair	Andre da Silva	adasilva@auburn.edu
	Member	Jeb S. Fields	jsfields@ufl.edu
	Member	Damon Abdi	DAbdi@agcenter.lsu.edu
Krezdorn Doctoral Writing	Chair	Jennings, Katherine M.	katie_jennings@ncsu.edu
	Member	Penny Perkins-Veazie	penelope_perkins@ncsu.edu
	Member	Catherine Simpson	catherine.simpson@ttu.edu
Smeal Leadership	Chair	Daniel Leskovar	d-leskovar@tamu.edu
	Member	Shad Nelson	shad.nelson@tamuk.edu
	Member	Leo Lombardini	lombardini@uga.edu
Extension Communications	Chair	Jim DelPrince	j.delprince@msstate.edu
	Member	Ping Yu	pingyu@uga.edu
	Member	Damon Abdi	DAbdi@agcenter.lsu.edu
Childers Outstanding Graduate Student	Chair	Christine Coker	ccoker@agcenter.lsu.edu
	Member	Sarah White	swhite4@clemson.edu
	Member	Jeb Fields	jsfields@ufl.edu
Outstanding ACB Club & Club Member		Gerald Burgner	gerald.burgner@ag.tamu.edu

# Instructions for Submission of Abstracts for Publication by ASHS

## To Publish Your Abstract in *HortScience*:

- The abstract title must appear in the Program.
- The paper must have been presented orally or as a poster at the meeting.
- One of the authors must be registered for the conference.
- The abstract must be formatted properly.

## Submission of Abstract

- File Format:** Each abstract must be submitted as a separate Word (.doc) file. If you use another word processing language, submit abstract in rich text format (.rtf).
- Deadline:**
- 1) At meeting: Give disk with file to the Chair of the session.
  - 2) Email abstracts as an attached file to the Chair of the session prior to the meeting or within a few days after the meeting. See the Program for the Chair's email address.

## Abstract Format

- Length:** Limit the abstract body to about 2000 characters.
- Font:** 12 point, Times New Roman or similar
- Format:** Format abstract as below. Asterisk denotes presenting author.

### Example Format

#### **Molecular Marker-Derived Genetic Similarity Analysis of a Segregating Blackberry Population**

Eric T. Stafne\*<sup>1</sup>, John R. Clark<sup>1</sup>, and Kim S. Lewers<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>316 Plant Sciences, Department of Horticulture, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR 72701, <sup>2</sup>USDA-ARS Fruit Lab, 10300 Baltimore Ave., BARC-West Bldg. 010A, Beltsville, MD 20705

A tetraploid blackberry population that segregates for two important morphological traits, thornlessness and primocane fruiting, was tested with molecular marker analysis. Both randomly amplified polymorphic DNA (RAPD) and simple sequence repeat (SSR) markers were used to screen a population of 98 genotypes within the population plus the two parents, 'Arapaho' and 'Prime-Jim'<sup>®</sup> (APF-12). RAPD analysis averaged 3.4 markers per primer, whereas SSR analysis yielded 3.0 markers per primer pair. Similarity coefficient derived from the Dice index averaged over all individuals was 63% for RAPD markers, 73% for SSR markers, and 66% for RAPD and SSR markers together. The average similarity coefficients ranged from a high of 72% to a low of 38% for RAPD markers, 80% to 57% for SSR markers, and 73% to 55% for both. Comparison of the parents indicated a similarity of 67% for RAPD markers, 62% for SSR markers, and 67% for both. This is similar to a previous study that reported the similarity coefficient at 66%. Although inbreeding exists within the population, the level of heterozygosity is high. Also, evidence of tetrasomic inheritance was uncovered within the molecular marker analysis. This population will be used to identify potential markers linked to both morphological traits of interest. Further genetic linkage analysis and mapping is needed to identify any putative markers.

## Tentative 2026 Program at a Glance

Friday, January 30																									
Omni Louisville Hotel	8:00	9:00	10:00	11:00	12:00	1:00	2:00	3:00	4:00	5:00															
Hotel Lobby	7:00 open										Registration														
Prefunction	Poster Room Set-up					Authors set-up posters as they arrive					Poster Viewing														
Omstead 7											Ornamentals Group - Underutilized Plant Materials for the Ornamentals Industry														
Omstead 2	Southern Fruit Workers																								
Olmstead 3	Watermelon Research Group																								
Clifton											Horticulture Administrators										Executive Com.				
Old Louisivle	ACB Club Share and Networking										ACB Activities, Tour, Meal or TBA										ACB Mixer TBA				
Olmstead 1	National ASHS Board of Directors																								
Saturday, January 31																									
	8:00	9:00	10:00	11:00	12:00	1:00	2:00	3:00	4:00	5:00															
Second Street Prefunction	7:00 open										Registration														
Prefunction	Poster Viewing All Day										Author at Even Number Poster					Author at Odd Number Poster					Remove Poster				
Olmstead 5	Judging Contest Set-Up										J. Benton Storey Horticulture Judging Contest										ACB Scoring				
Omstead 3	Watermelon Research Group																								
Od Louisville	Education					Extension										Overflow Sessions									
Olmstead 7	Overflow Sessions										Overflow Sessions														
Olmstead 1	J. B. Edmond UG Oral Paper Competition										Warren Barham Ph.D. Graduate Student Paper Competition														
Olmstead 6	Norman F. Childers M.S. Oral Paper Competition																								
Sunday, February 1																									
	8:00	9:00	10:00	11:00	12:00	1:00	2:00	3:00	4:00	5:00															
Second Street Prefunction	7:00 open										Registration														
Commonwealth 3	ACB Business Meeting										Business Mtg/Awards Prog.														
Crescent Hill	Vegetable Crops Section																								
Nbutchertown	Floriculture, Ornamentals & Turf Section																								
Nulu	Fruit Crops Section																								
Olmstead 1	Postharvest & Biotechnology Section																								
											SAAS Board Mtg					SAAS Business Mtg					SAAS Social				