



Ohio State HCS News

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A Passion for Flowers: Claudio Pasion



Floriculture Specialist Claudio Pasion addresses the needs of commercial industries and growers in Ohio.

planting."



Next time you go home and look at your garden, imagine the flowers living in the wild. Those plants are available to you because they have been tested to thrive in the soil and weather of Ohio. **Dr. Claudio Pasion**, an assistant professor in the Horticulture & Crop Science Department at Ohio State, plays a crucial role in evaluating and preparing plants that will be in your garden in the future. His focus in floriculture - the cultivation of herbaceous plants with the purpose of providing visual pleasure to consumers - is a fine example of how Ohio State uses its research capacities to address the needs of commercial industries and growers in the state of Ohio.

With the increasing number of immigrant workers in the floriculture industry, [Dr. Pasion](#) is preparing Ohio State students for a career working alongside or possibly supervising Latino workers. Slated for Autumn Quarter 2007, H&CS 294: The Latino Workforce (Call # 16283-2) is a new course that will examine current issues faced by immigrant workers in agriculture. Cultural, historical & legal issues affecting workplace relations will be discussed.

Flowers and greenhouses brought Dr. Pasion to visit the United States for the first time. Love made the United States his home. Dr. Pasion, a native of Argentina, recalled, "I have been interested in floriculture since high school. I think it is in my genes. My grandmother had a garden, and I would help her with the soil sowing and

After marrying an American citizen Pasion met on his first trip to the United States, he wondered what to do with his career. He said, "I didn't think anyone was going to pay attention to my degree, so I decided to go get my master's in horticulture. I was finishing and my advisor said I should go for my Ph.D. I was 37 and was not sure I really wanted to do more school - I was old and poor!" But Pasion decided to pursue his Ph.D. and finished in 1993.

Pasion came to Ohio State because of a job opportunity. When asked about what his job involves, he responded, "I work with the growers. My contacts are with the industry. In my heart, I am a grower. I respect them very much and feel very comfortable with them." These growers have greenhouses, and Pasion helps them find ways to economically produce high-quality flowers.

Pasion also does applied research relating to the growers and their needs. He said, "Most of the research I do involves finding tools for growers to use and methodologies to improve production to make it easier, more economical, and how to avoid problems." In addition, one of Pasion's biggest responsibilities is each year's trial of new plants. He explained, "Like with cars, plants come out with a new model every year. Sometimes it is a totally different design and sometimes the changes are small. The company that owns the genetics owns the varieties, and they have to keep the interest of the consumers. Companies have to come up with new cultivars. (Cultivars are a variety of a plant that has been created or selected through breeding, usually patented and maintained through cultivation). They can be new colors, new aesthetics, or something else new." Pasion plants the cultivars in containers and they grow in the greenhouse. In early May, the cultivars are planted outside and grown in beds until they die in the fall. Pasion then evaluates the plant's performance and determines which cultivars flourish and which ones do not do well.

Pasion also serves as a plant doctor, helping growers figure out what is happening when plants have an unexpected problem. He travels to greenhouses and provides evaluation and feedback while fostering best practices. He said, "We look at how to reduce fertilizers and do less damage to the environment. In addition, we also remember that growers have to feed their families, so we help them figure out how to get a good product and make money at the same time."

Dr. Pasion's advice for Latin@s at Ohio State, "Work hard and try to be the best you can."

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