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**CONTACT:**

**UF PROFESSOR GARNERS PRESTIGIOUS TEACHING AWARD**

*Sandra Wilson, Ph.D., Named Undergraduate Teacher of the Year*

FORT PIERCE, Fla.---University of Florida Indian River Research and Education Center Associate Professor Sandra Wilson has garnered more recognition for outstanding teaching skills. Wilson will be named *UF College on Agricultural and Life Sciences Undergraduate Teacher of the Year* on April 13, at the UF Scholarship and Learning Awards Banquet and Commencement to be held at the University of Florida Gainesville campus.

“This achievement reminds us once again that Sandy is a distinguished educator, with the capacity to influence the entire statewide horticultural industry in a very positive way,” said Brian Scully, UF Indian River Research and Education Center, or IRREC, Professor and Director.

Wilson’s talents as an educator were elevated to a national level when in 2005, she was recognized with the Teacher Fellow Award from the North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture, for her outstanding dedication towards teaching. She is associate professor of Environmental Horticulture at the UF IRREC, located west of Fort Pierce. Celebrated for innovation in the development of new courses and for the creative use of technology to enhance teaching, she developed a web-based virtual plant identification interface to help students learn plant material and landscape principles in multiple climatic regions. Her digital materials on plant propagation and greenhouse education are used nationwide.

Florida Native Landscaping, Annuals and Perennials and Plant Propagation are some of the courses Wilson instructs. In total, she teaches five courses, four of which are dually listed as both undergraduate and graduate offerings.

To provide an outdoor laboratory in which she is able to immerse her students in these topics, she spearheaded the development of two botanical gardens situated at the UF Fort Pierce location. In the gardens, class participants learn proper planning, identification and care of nearly 250 species.

A current UF student, Robert Webb, said, “Dr. Wilson’s gift for teaching has turned a complex subject into an exciting, interesting, intriguing and enormously informative learning experience for me.”

Wilson’s teaching pursuits have reached beyond the local and statewide student population to include members of the local industry and garden enthusiasts as well. Local nursery owners have donated nearly all of the plant material and the maintenance support equipment in the two gardens. Local garden club members tour the gardens regularly; one organization has pledged a generous scholarship for one of her students.

Wilson’s research and teaching program has attracted nearly \$900,000 in grant funding for her work. She has authored over 31 refereed and 40 non-refereed journal articles, and she is sought after as a national and international speaker.

According to Terril Nell, Ph.D., chair for the UF Environmental Horticulture Department, Wilson strives to develop critical thinking skills in students as a foundation for a lifetime of learning. One of her strategies for enhancing students’ comprehension of course material is

through peer learning and teaching exercises that allow students to communicate their thought processes and receive feedback. She sets clear objectives, goals, and expectations and also strives to address the variety of learning styles found among her students.

“Sandy has demonstrated an outstanding ability to positively encourage students to learn in new and unique ways,” said Nell.

Wilson received both Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees from the University of Delaware. She holds a Doctorate in Plant Physiology from Clemson University. Dr. Wilson completed post doctoral studies at both Clemson University and Chiba University, Japan.

-UF/IFAS/IRREC-