

STAA

SEED TRADE ASSOCIATION OF ARIZONA

MAY 2024



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A photograph of Wayne Alford, a middle-aged man with grey hair, wearing a light blue short-sleeved button-down shirt and blue jeans. He is standing next to a large, industrial seed processing machine. The machine is processing a large volume of yellowish-brown seed material, which is being moved by a conveyor system. The background shows the interior of a large facility with metal structures and pipes.

Dwayne Alford, 2023-24 president of the Seed Trade Association of Arizona, sees encouraging and promoting a new generation of leaders to the seed industry as a priority for the organization.

"I feel it's important to bring young people into the industry to carry on the business when we're all retired," he said. "It's fun to see the kids come through school and recruit them into the industry."

And so "Cultivating Tomorrow: Young Leaders in Seeds" is the theme he has selected for his tenure as president and for the 2024 convention to be held May 1-3 at the Loews Ventana Canyon Resort in Tucson. Last year alone, the organization gave a total of \$9,000 to 10 scholarship recipients who intend to pursue careers in agriculture.

Alford noted that STAA's bylaws outline three mandates for the organization: dedication to and development of a robust seed program; advocate for members in legislative matters; and disseminate current industry information.

To that end, Alford has engaged several speakers for the convention who will provide regulatory updates, issues impacting the industry, educational opportunities for agriculture students offered through the University of Arizona and an introduction to the Arizona Crop Improvement Association. Featured speaker will be Dr. Shane C. Burgess, dean of the UA College of Agriculture and Life and Environmental Sciences.

Alford has a diverse background. Raised in Tucson from a young age, he obtained a bachelor's degree in business administration with a major in finance from UA in 1985. After graduating, he worked in real estate until moving to Yuma in 1990 to accept a job in the peanut business. Two years later, he started a specialty advertising business, which he operated until becoming general manager of Yuco Gin in 2003 for the next 15 years. In 2018, he joined the management team of Barkley Seed and since 2019 has been the executive vice president for the company.

"I love business, regardless of the widget, whether real estate, peanuts, cotton or seeds," Alford said. He added, "We enjoyed raising our two boys in a smaller community like Yuma."

He acknowledged he had no background in agriculture before moving to Yuma but has come to love the industry. "I like the people and the fact that no two days are alike," he said. "In ag management, I'm both indoors and out in the field and I like that."

Alford has been involved with STAA as the Barkley Seed representative since 2020 and quickly rose through the chairs to become president. ■

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EMPIRE
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MERIDIAN
Lettuce



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The background of the page features a world map where the continents are formed by clusters of golden-brown wheat grains. Overlaid on the lower-left portion of the map is a white, glowing molecular structure consisting of interconnected spheres and lines, resembling a DNA helix or a chemical pathway. The overall color palette is warm, with shades of beige, cream, and light brown.

Developing Seed to Feed the World

BY JOYCE LOBECK

Data shows that by 2050, the world's population will reach 9.6 billion people, but that number does not clearly explain how many people who will need to be fed.

"They will eat like 12 billion people," said Dr. Hikmet Budak, professor of agriculture and researcher at Arizona Western College. That is because with rising incomes and expectations, many people will want to eat better than they do today, he explained.



To meet that need will require a much larger increase in food production than is now being achieved, he said. Grain output alone needs to increase by 1.7 percent annually; the current rate is 0.9 percent. At the same time, food production around the globe is facing increased pressures of insect pests, plant diseases, loss of arable land and seismic climate change.

But solutions also need to be found that rely less on chemicals for the sake of the environment, Budak said. "We will need all the tools and technology we have for plant breeding in order to feed people in the United States and around the world."

He offered three examples of tools that need to be adapted to plant breeding:

CRISPR- Cas 9 is a simple yet powerful tool for editing genomes. It enables researchers to easily alter DNA sequences and modify gene function. It has many potential applications, including correcting genetic defects, preventing the spread of diseases and improving the growth and resilience of crops. Budak explained that the technology acts like a pair of scissors to cut out DNA for undesirable traits, such as cadmium levels, from a plant species. The technology also can be used to add desirable DNA from other plants of the same species, such as improving zinc deficiency, a major global issue, and increasing drought tolerance.

Adapt machine learning – AI – to agriculture "so we can predict and select the best characteristics of any plant species."

Precision agriculture to identify and react to portions of fields that are subject to diseases and other crop issues. "Machine learning will help with that."

"Transforming these technologies and data into knowledge is our future in agriculture," he said, emphasizing that CRISPR editing genes is not the controversial GMO that introduces DNA from wholly unrelated species.

Already there has been some success using CRISPR-Cas 9 technology, Budak said. A master student came up with a barley variety with increased zinc and much lower cadmium levels so

"Transforming these technologies and data into knowledge is our future in agriculture,"



PHOTO BY EGAN JARONSKI

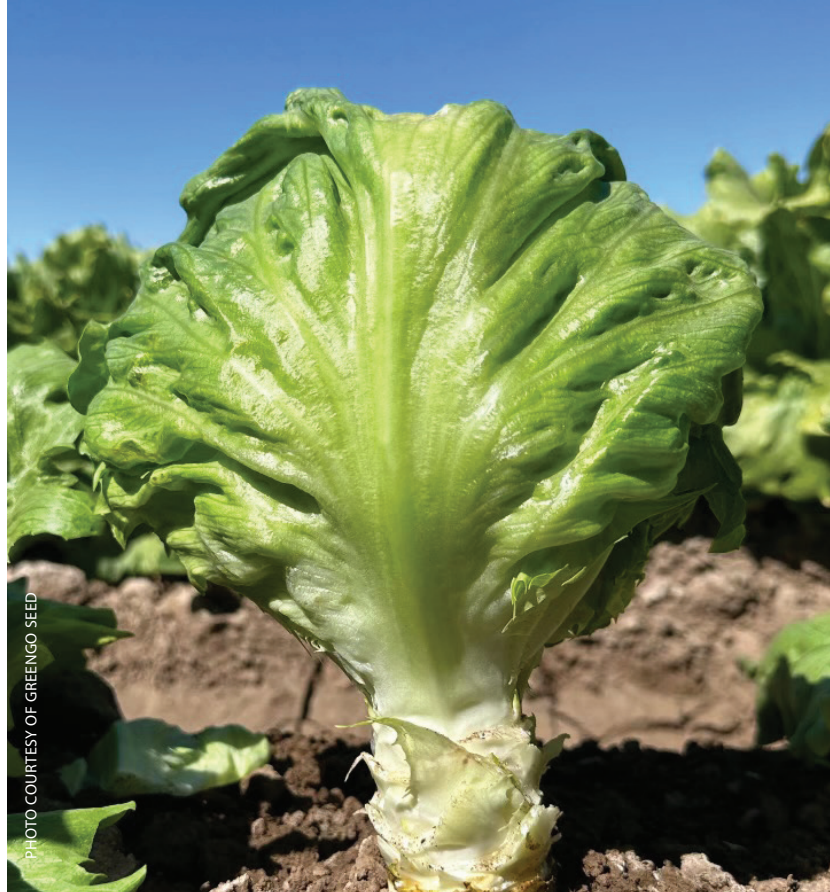
Dr. Hikmet Budak is shown in his genomics lab in Montana BioAg, Inc. where he previously was employed. Budak, who has a doctorate in genetics and plant breeding, joined the faculty of Arizona Western College a year ago as an agriculture professor and researcher.

the crop can be exported to Asian countries. Lettuce production companies are asking for solutions to the increasing presence of fusarium, a fungus that is devastating to lettuce. And a wheat variety that is more tolerant to heat and drought stress has been created using CRISPR that could be ready to go to market in a couple of years.

Budak, who has a doctorate in genetics and plant breeding, joined the AWC staff in July 2023 and has been seeking input from the agriculture industry on how he might assist it with research and education. He also has developed a new plant and animal genetics course for university students in Arizona.

But there's still a place today for traditional plant breeding that started with domestication of the first agricultural plants, a practice estimated to date back 9,000 to 11,000 years. Early farmers simply selected food plants with particular desirable characteristics and used them as progenitors for subsequent generations, resulting in an accumulation of valuable traits over time.

In modern agriculture, that process gets a helping hand from plant breeders. It starts with workers taking pollen from a flower of a plant with a desirable trait and putting it on a flower of another plant – replicating by hand the natural process traditionally done by bees and other pollinators, explained Davie Brooks II, co-owner and plant breeder with Greengo Seed, which focuses on lettuce.



Plant breeders with Greengo Seed have developed a head lettuce variety on a longer stem to make for easier harvesting by machine and hand. It also keeps the lettuce cleaner since it's further off the soil.

Data shows that by 2050, the world's population will reach 9.6 billion people, but... "They will eat like 12 billion people,"

The resultant seeds are planted and when the plants are mature, the ones with the desirable traits are dug up, the seeds harvested and planted the next year, he said. "Over time we hope to have more nice heads until all the heads in the plot have the qualities we want. It can take five to seven years to get from start to commercial production."

One area of concern has been development of iceberg lettuce varieties with the desirable size, shape and weight and nice ribs. While these characteristics are aesthetically pleasing, they also have practical applications for packing and shipping, he said, so the heads easily fit 24 to a box and the ribs don't shatter.

Other challenges are developing varieties that can tolerate a reduction in water and warmer growing conditions without bolting, he said. Yet another challenge is producing lettuce varieties that are tolerant to such devastating plant diseases as fusarium wilt and downy mildew. There have been some promising developments, Brooks said. But it's an ongoing challenge as diseases constantly evolve.

Work is also progressing on breeding iceberg lettuce adapted to automated machine harvesting, Brooks said. This means breeding a variety with longer stems, enabling the machine to get under the head. But it also makes hand harvesting easier. And it makes the heads less prone to bottom rot because they're above wet soil.

The same traditional breeding process is used in the constant search for new varieties of forage crops and grains to meet evolving needs, said Donny Gray, plant Breeder at Second Nature Research, which is owned by Barkley Seed, Inc. That's with higher yields, standability, nutrition value and disease resistance of forage crops or end use traits present in durum wheat prized by pasta makers, including gluten strength and semolina color.

As with other crops produced in the desert Southwest, varieties are also needed that are adapted to the local growing conditions – warmer springs and a lingering drought.

"We're constantly making improvements over the years of all the traits," Gray said. "We are driven by pasta makers and forage crop markets. Diseases and insect pests are constantly evolving so breeding is needed to help the plant's defenses against them." ■

Young leaders

BY JOYCE LOBECK

There's a new crop of young leaders in the seed industry who grew in the computer age and the emergence of cutting-edge technology. While they may do things differently, they have the same commitment to agriculture and passion for the industry as those who have gone before them.

Some have deep roots in agriculture, stretching back to fathers and grandfathers and even great-grandfathers. Others are new to the industry, enticed by the lure of working outdoors, the challenge of making things grow and the satisfaction of helping feed the world.

Here are some of their stories:



Dillon Chavez

Dillon Chavez is the product development specialist for Syngenta Vegetable Seeds in the Desert Southwest. Pursuing a career in agriculture came naturally to the Yuma County native. His grandfather had a small hay farm and his father was a produce grower in the Roll area.

"I've been involved in agriculture essentially my whole life," he said. "Riding around in a truck with my dad checking on fields. Prior to graduating from college, I did various jobs on the farm such as irrigation, tractor driving, equipment prep, fabrication of irrigation pumps, rogueing lettuce seed, harvesting lettuce seed, crossing lettuce varieties and much more."

Chavez obtained a bachelor's degree in 2017 in agricultural and resource economics with a minor in business from the University of Arizona. He then returned home and worked with his father for three years. In 2020, he went to work for Syngenta in the seed industry because he wanted a career that gave him more time for his young family. He is the father of a 2-year-old girl and a newborn baby boy.

It's a career choice Chavez has embraced because he gets to work with "so many great people" and build relationships with others, not being tied to a desk and being able to enjoy the beauty of the outdoors and agriculture.



Blake Hodges

Blake Hodges works for Pinnacle Seed. He follows in the footsteps of his grandfather, father and uncle who were in the seed business with H&H Seed, the company founded in 1979 by his grandfather.

The first three years of college, he attended the University of Arizona in Tucson, majoring in agriculture. His senior year, he returned to Yuma to finish college at UA-Yuma while working as a research and development intern for Pinnacle Seed, launched in 2014 by Mike Vanoli.

After earning his bachelor's degree in agricultural systems management from the UA in 2016, Hodges was hired fulltime by Pinnacle Seed as its desert sales representative. "I'm still here 10 years later," he observed, adding that he has enjoyed the challenge of starting with a brand-new company and helping grow it into a big player in the seed industry.

When he got the call it seemed like destiny, he said. "Seed business runs in the family. My grandfather owned a seed business, my father owned a seed business. I wanted to follow in their footsteps. It was the only thing I knew."

He also likes that his clients in the industry are still "very old school. We do use new technology, but it's still a hands-on business. It's still done on a handshake. And I could never work in an office all day"

Hodges and his wife have three small children, too young yet to say whether there will be a fourth generation.



Nathan Peretz

Nathan Peretz, born in Brawley and raised in Palm Desert, headed east for college because, he explained, “I was chasing a girl.” That’s how he came to earn a college degree in 2015 from Temple University in Philadelphia.

That degree was in horticulture, “but I always had an interest in veggies,” said Peretz. “I started in landscape architecture but realized I was more of a crop person than sitting all day at a drafting table.”

So he headed back home and following in the footsteps of his father, who worked in the seed industry for more than 30 years, got a job with Seedwiz in 2018. He liked the work a lot, but the small start-up company ran out of money a year later and let him go.

Armed with a stack of resumes, he attended an industry event at the University of California-Davis in search of another job. That led to his being hired in 2019 by Rijk Zwaan USA. In 2023, he was promoted to sales and crop specialist. Now based in Yuma, he splits his time between Yuma and Imperial counties, with frequent trips to Salinas in the summer.

He enjoys “putting together the parts of a puzzle of the crops and where they’re going” stretching from Bard to Tacna. “There’s a lot of really good people in the business. And it feels good to be helping feed the country and the world. I can’t think of anything better to do.”

As for future goals, he wants to start a family. And he wants to continue his involvement in the Seed Trade Association of Arizona, for which he now chairs the vegetable seed committee. I want to be on the forefront of supporting farming with the public ... to let them know where their food comes.”



Ty Swain

Ty Swain doesn’t come from a farming family, but he grew up around horses and farm animals his parents had. “I liked that better than the idea of being cooped up in an office all day.”

He was active in 4-H and FFA, and his first job was working on a hay farm running a rake. Initially, he wanted to be a PCA (pest control advisor) but quickly realized college was not for him. So he dropped out of school and went to work for Select Seed of Arizona, crediting Mike Didier with teaching him about the seed business.

“I fell in love with the business ... being able to contribute to the farm program and help feed the country and the world,” Swain said. “It’s cool to know my work has an impact.”

In 2020, he took a position with TS&L as product development specialist for leafy greens and brassicas. He likes that he has a lot of freedom to pursue his work, gets to meet a lot “of really smart people” and is able to travel and see how farming is done in other parts of the country.

Swain also likes seeing new technology being developed and how it is being implemented in agriculture, such as automated transplanters, automated harvesters and alternative biocontrols to address field problems.

A Kofa High School graduate in 2010, Swain and his wife are parents of a little boy.

2024 Speakers



Paul Brierley

Paul E. Brierley, CEO and EDD of the Arizona Department of Agriculture since last summer, will be providing seed industry leaders with an update on the department and various issues it is working on.

Brierley brought to the Agriculture Department a deep understanding of agriculture in the state and a relationship with the seed industry through his previous position as the head of the University of Arizona's Yuma Center of Excellence for Desert Agriculture as well as serving on the board of the Arizona Crop Improvement Association.

Brierley grew up on his family's farm in Santa Barbara County (CA). After earning a computer science degree and spending five years in the corporate research world, he returned to his agriculture roots in southeast Arizona where he got involved with the Arizona Farm Bureau as a volunteer leader. Then, after completing Project CENTRL (Arizona Center for Rural Leadership), he served as the Farm Bureau's director of organization for 10 years.

In 2014, he moved to Yuma to become the founding executive director of the Yuma Center of Excellence for Desert Agriculture, growing to understand and appreciate Yuma's vibrant agriculture industry, including the seed industry. The center assisted Seed Trade Association of Arizona with getting the Seed Pin Map, vital to maintaining the isolation of seed crops, back on track. He also assisted seed companies with phytosanitary certifications required for seed exports.

"I came to realize how significant the seed industry is," said Brierley. He also came to understand the need for collaboration with "people on the ground" and the role the regulatory process plays in facilitating commerce across state lines and around the world.



Dr. Shane C. Burgess

As the convention's featured speaker, Dr. Shane C. Burgess, vice president of the University of Arizona Division of Agriculture, Life and Veterinary Sciences, and Cooperative Extension (ALVSCE), will provide an overview of the programs the university provides to support agriculture in the state.

Dr. Burgess also serves and the Charles-Sander Dean of the College of Agriculture, Life and Environmental Sciences. Together, the college, Cooperative Extension and Arizona Experiment Station serve as standard-bearers for UA's land grant mission of education, research and outreach. UA has been ranked as the top performing university in the world in water resources.

In his remarks, Dr. Burgess will discuss the importance of the seed industry to agriculture sustainability. He will touch on some of the ways the seed industry and science overlap through new product development and gene editing to address the challenge of developing new varieties that use less water, have increased nutrition to humans or animals, shorten time to harvest, or add small changes to plant structure that might help with automated harvest.

Dr. Burgess also will highlight academic programs that lead to career pathways into the seed industry and any important/relevant things those departments are working on. And he will thank STAA members for their scholarship program that supports students studying majors involved in seed business and the internships they host for UA students.

A native of New Zealand, Dr. Burgess has worked around the world as a practicing veterinarian and scientist. A first-generation college graduate, he has a degree in veterinary medicine, did a radiology residency and has a Ph.D. in virology, immunology and cancer biology, conferred by the University of Bristol Medical School. For his volunteer work during the 2001 U.K. foot and mouth disease crisis, he was awarded the Institute for Animal Health Director's Award for Service.



Tanya Hodges

An update on current academic programs offered by the University of Arizona on its Yuma campus will be presented during the convention by Tanya Hodges, who has served for several years as the regional academic programs manager for the institution.

It was announced in April that she has been selected as the new executive director of the Yuma Center of Excellence for Desert Agriculture. She succeeds Paul Brierley, who became the director of the Arizona Department of Agriculture last summer. YCEDA is a public-private partnership dedicated to the research of soil, water, plant diseases and other issues impacting desert agriculture.

Since joining the UA staff in 2007, Hodges has been an advocate on behalf of the students in Yuma, La Paz and Imperial counties, and has helped countless students access higher education closer to home through the UA-Yuma Academic Center.

Over the years, she has grown the UA-Yuma center into a higher education resource that offers local students 20 majors, while working with regional industries and agencies to ensure that the degree programs will serve the surrounding communities and provide successful life trajectories for graduates.

A Yuma County native, Hodges earned bachelor's and master's degrees in agricultural education from UA, then went on to earn her doctor of education degree in Innovation and Leadership from Arizona State University.



Pat Miller

Pat Miller, senior director of special projects for the American Seed Trade Association, will provide an update on seed industry issues during the convention.

Miller, who has been with ASTA since 2007, works with state and regional seed industry associations to monitor seed-related state initiatives and to assist with legislative, regulatory and grassroots activities. He also directs ASTA's Seed Advocate program, informing and mobilizing seed industry activists.

A 25-year veteran of the ag industry, Miller formerly ran an association management firm and counted among his clients the Texas Ag Industries Association, the Texas Certified Crop Advisers program, the Texas Plant Protection Conference, the Texas Independent Ag Consultants Association and the Texas Agricultural Aviation Association. He holds a bachelor's degree in marketing from the University of North Texas



Alan Rubida

An introduction to the Arizona Crop Improvement Association and how it serves the seed industry will be presented during the convention by Alan Rubida.

Rubida, seed production and quality assurance manager for Barkley Seed, Inc., is in his second year of a two-year term as president of the ACIA. He plans to talk about the history and development of the organization, what it stands for and its role for Arizona's seed industry.

The Arizona Crop Improvement Association provides administrative support for the seed industry in the desert Southwest, is the liaison with state and federal regulators and protects both the industry and the consumer by ensuring the minimum genetic and mechanical purity and germination of seed through its quality assurance programs.

Rubida was raised on the still operational fourth-generation homestead farm and ranch in Java, S.D. He earned bachelor's and master's degrees in agronomy with a focus on seed technology and production from South Dakota State University. In 1986, he began his career with the New Mexico Crop Improvement Association. Over the past 38 years, he held various positions with the cotton industry.

During that time, he came to know Robby Barkley, owner of Barkley Seed in Yuma, and went to work for him in 2002. As a representative for the company, Rubida served as the president of Seed Trade Association of Arizona in 2007.



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Water where

Sprinklers get the jump on the early morning sun, going to work delivering irrigation water to a freshly planted field in the Dome Valley.

Opposite photo: An irrigator works at getting water moving through the rows of a freshly planted winter vegetable field in the Gila Valley

PHOTOS BY RANDY HOEFT/N2PHOTOgraphics

“It’s a highly critical food production area. These food products can’t be raised anywhere else.”

BY JOYCE LOBECK

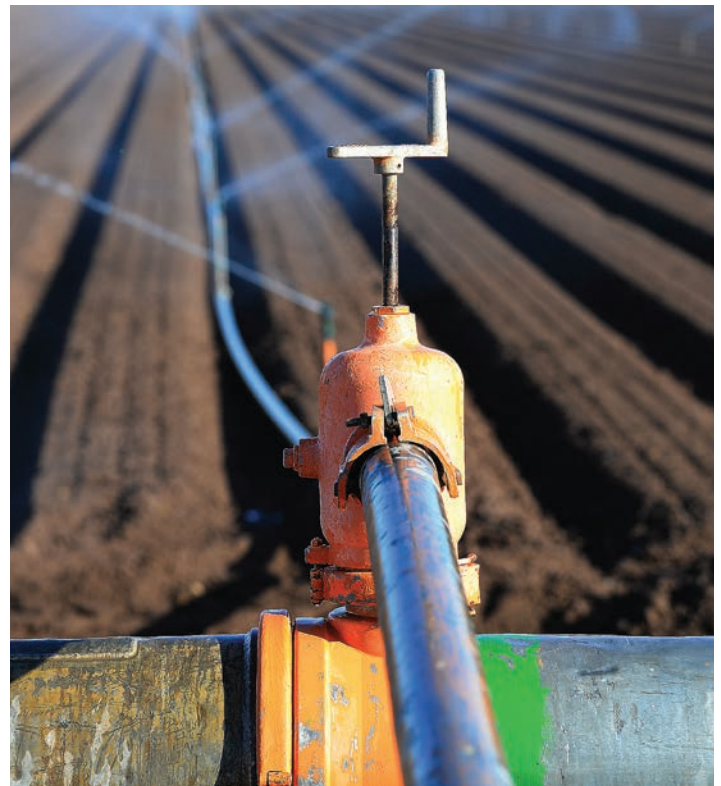
Agriculture in the desert Southwest may be called upon to conserve water so cities don’t have to. But it would come at a cost to the nation’s - and world’s - food supply.

A recent study concluded that farmers in the Lower Basin states of the Colorado River, in particular those in Yuma and Imperial counties, produce a considerably higher dollar value of crops with the water they use than do states in the Upper Basin.

In the Lower Basin (Arizona, California and Nevada), farmers used an average of 1.2 acre-feet of water to produce \$1,000 in crops, according to the University of Arizona Ag Water Footprints and Productivity in the Colorado River Basin study conducted by George Frisvold, a UA professor and economic researcher, and his team. In contrast, farmers in the Upper Basin (Colorado, Utah, Wyoming and New Mexico) used 7.6 acre-feet of water to produce \$1,000 in crops – six times the amount of water.

“That’s pretty significant when you think about water cutbacks,” said Paul Brierley, director of the Arizona Department of Agriculture. “That’s for the whole Lower Basin. Yuma would use even less water for that \$1,000 in crops. The desert is so productive. It’s known for its high yields and high value because we can control the water and other inputs.”

In his study, Frisvold substantiated that statement, reporting that eight counties in the desert Southwest accounted for 90 percent of crop net returns with two-thirds of irrigation water consumed. The remaining Lower Basin counties generated only 10 percent of the basin’s net crop revenues while consuming one-third of the region’s irrigation water.



Irrigation water flows through color coded sprinkler pipes in the North Gila Valley.

Page 16: A pulsating sprinkler head, one of hundreds in a field in the Yuma Valley, delivers water to freshly planted cauliflower transplants.

it counts

Yuma and Imperial counties produce 90 percent of the vegetable crops that feed the U.S. and Canada in the winter, noted Wade Noble, water law attorney. "It's a highly critical food production area. These food products can't be raised anywhere else." Even the alfalfa grown in Imperial County, often criticized for its high-water use, is valuable, he observed. Without alfalfa to feed dairy cows, there would be no milk, ice cream or cheese that people enjoy.

"When you can generate \$1,000 in revenue from one acre-foot of water, that water has value," Noble said. "Farmers here want to be treated fairly."

Agriculture entities in Yuma and Imperial counties have among the highest priority rights to water from the Colorado River, which means the right to the last drop, Noble explained. That's something they're prepared to fight for in ongoing negotiations as the seven states struggle to come up with a new management plan for the river before current guidelines for sharing the water expire at the end of 2026.

Upper and lower basin states have come up with competing proposals. One sticking point is who has the right to water that Arizona has conserved in Lake Mead to help maintain its level, Noble said. Another is who should bear the losses of water to evaporation in the system. So far, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation has not taken a position.

Meanwhile, a second wet winter in a row has provided some breathing room to those who depend on the water the river carries from the Rocky Mountains in Colorado to the Mexican border, observed Noble.

As of early April, snowpack was about 100 percent of the average. That's good news for the roughly 40 million people in the Southwest who rely on the Colorado River for much of their water. The resultant spring runoff is expected to boost levels in the river's two main reservoirs – Lake Powell and Lake Mead.

It won't be anywhere near enough to make up for 24 years of drought. But it will be enough to relieve some stress short term over the availability of water to the seven states that depend on the river to keep faucets flowing and millions of acres of farmland irrigated. All the moisture California has been getting this winter and spring also will help, as it alleviates drought conditions for that state.

That means the Lower Basin states probably will get through this year and 2025 reasonably well under the ongoing Tier 1 shortage declaration, said Noble. First going into effect January 1, 2022, Tier 1 calls for a cut of 512,000 acre-feet of water per year from Arizona's 2.8 million-acre-foot allocation. The shortage is being borne by Central Arizona Project water users because of an agreement made to obtain federal authorization of the project, with the water cutbacks impacting central Arizona farmers.

"There's no question we need a plan for continued drought," Noble said. "Heaven only knows when this drought will end."

That's in addition to climate change that has brought warmer and dryer weather to the West. Furthermore, demand has increased for the water over the years even as the river was shrinking, Brierley said. And it has become clear that the river originally was overallocated.

However, Noble concluded, "I believe we can survive with the water that comes downstream with cooperation and careful management. And developing alternate sources will be necessary." ■





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The Spotlight

Barkley Seed

BY JOYCE LOBECK

From its humble beginnings in the 1800s with a 160-acre homestead, Barkley Seed has become part of a major seed, farming and processing company with holdings in multiple states. Throughout the years, though, there has been one constant – it has remained a family-led operation with a member of the Barkley family at the helm.



Robby Barkley,
President/CEO of Barkley Seed, Inc.



PHOTOS BY RANDY HOEFT/N2PHOTOgraphics

For almost half a century since current owner Robby Barkley took over Barkley Seed, the company has evolved and expanded. Under the umbrella of Barkley Ag Enterprise, it now includes three affiliates:

- Barkley Company of Arizona is a family farming operation based in Yuma, annually growing several thousand acres of vegetables, citrus, cotton and grain.
- Barkley Seed, Inc., also based in Yuma, operates throughout the southwestern United States with two divisions: one side markets seeds for cereal forage crops for the dairy industry while the grain side handles durum wheat sold domestically and to Italy for pasta.
- GreenGate Fresh, LLP, operates in both Yuma and Salinas, California, and is committed to providing high quality salads to the foodservice industry.

At the time Barkley Seed was started in 1971 by Robby's father, it was a bulk business, supplying Saudi Arabia with certified wheat seed. That business faded as Saudi Arabia became self-sufficient with its own wheat production.

When that happened, the company and its growers converted to producing high quality Desert Durum wheat, prized by pasta makers for its protein content, gluten strength and amber color. In 2012, Barkley Seed re-acquired the Desert Durum Wheat Research Program previously sold to Monsanto Company and formed Second Nature Research to focus on developing high-quality, high-yielding and identity-preserved durum wheat varieties for planting in the desert Southwest.

In the mid-1990s, Barkley Seed entered Imperial Valley with the purchase of a grain elevator in Brawley. Today the company has facilities in Yuma, Roll and Wellton in Arizona, and Brawley, California. More recently, Barkley Seed expanded regionally with the purchase of the Five Points seed plant in California, and in July 2023 acquired a seed plant in Brigham City, Utah.

In 2003, Barkley Seed bought the former H&H Seed property and entered into the Bermuda grass seed business. Today, the company produces certified quality durum, wheat, safflower, oats, barley, Bermuda grass and Piper Sudan seed and works with Legacy Seeds on its triticale program – a hybrid cross between wheat and rye.

"Due to the maturity of the grain segment of our business, our strategic focus over the past five to six years has been directed towards the expansion of our cereal forage seed division," stated Dwayne Alford, executive vice president. He highlighted this commitment through investments in such facilities as the Five

"When one sector experiences a downturn, the other often thrives, and occasionally both sectors thrive simultaneously."

Points, California, and Brigham City, Utah, seed plants.

"Barkley Seed has benefited from the diversity of markets between grain and seed," he said. "When one sector experiences a downturn, the other often thrives, and occasionally both sectors thrive simultaneously."

He added: "Our company's success is fundamentally rooted in the dedication and hard work of our 87 exceptional full-time employees."

◀ Pictured left to right (page 19): Dwayne Alford, Donny Gray, Michael Edgar, Robby Barkley, Dean Wolfe and Alan Rubida.

Page 20: Dean Wolfe and Donny Gray look over one of Second Nature Research's plot fields.



“Our company’s success is fundamentally rooted in the dedication and hard work of our 87 exceptional full-time employees.”

While dedicating his own resources, Robby has also been instrumental in securing other private funding for the University of Arizona Yuma Agricultural Station, Glen Curtis Building, the Agriculture Science Complex to be shared by the University of Arizona, Northern Arizona University and Arizona Western College, and the Yuma County Ag Producers Scholarship fund, which support students through AWC and UA. He is past president of the UA Ag “100” Council and chairs the advisory board for the Yuma Center of Excellence in Desert Agriculture, along with involvement in a number of other agriculture-related organizations.

Barkley Seed also has a long history of involvement with the Seed Trade Association of Arizona. Four Barkley Seed employees have held the position of STAA president: Senior Vice President Michael Edgar (2002), Seed Production and Quality Assurance Manager Alan Rubida (2007), sales manager Dean Wolfe (2016) and Dwayne Alford, who is the current STAA president. In addition, Rubida currently serves as president of the Arizona Crop Improvement Association.

The company also is committed to the community, supporting such events as the annual Harvest Dinner and various youth programs.

Barkley Seed has deep roots in Yuma, reaching back to the late 1800s when Finley Barkley, a railroad man from Tehama, Calif., came to the Yuma area to homestead. His nephews, Hugh Barkley and Leslie Barkley, came to work Fin’s 160-acre homestead for him, building a tent house and leveling the land in the Yuma Valley with a mule team and Fresno scraper.

Eventually Hugh returned to northern California while Les stayed and became a successful farmer and rancher. His son, James, joined his father on the farm while raising three children: Mary, Jim Jr. and Robert. Throughout the years, James bought up land and expanded the business, forming Barkley Seed and Grain in 1971. And he grew the farming business from a family farm to a far-ranging agri-business operation.

James died in 1979 when the plane he was piloting crashed. Some lean years followed as his widow Louise and son Robby worked hard to keep the business going. Over time, the Barkley organization became strong once again with Robby at the helm. Today, Robert “Robby” Barkley is president and CEO of Barkley Ag Enterprises, LLC, which provides administration and management oversight to affiliates Barkley Company of Arizona, Barkley Seed Inc. and GreenGate Fresh, LLP.

Several family members also are involved in the business. Robby’s nephew Hank Auza is a partner and farm manager, nephew Chris Auza is the harvest manager for the farm and runs the computer GPS mapping program, son Toby Jones runs Greengate Fresh and the real estate division, and son Michael Barkley is involved in a greenhouse business and permanent crops.

“As a proud member of the Yuma community, our local business underscores the significance of giving back financially and through volunteerism,” said Robby Barkley. “We are dedicated to contributing both as individuals and as an organization.” ■

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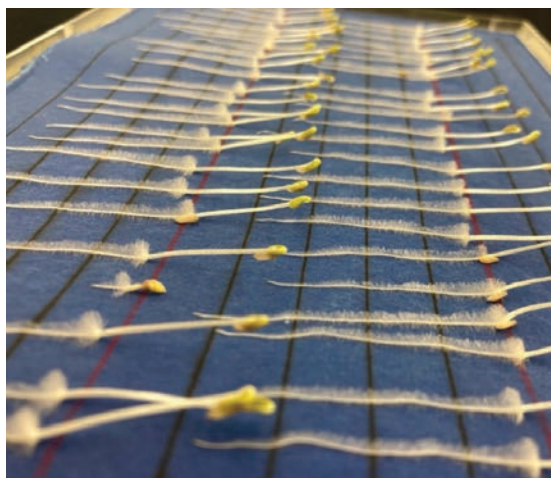
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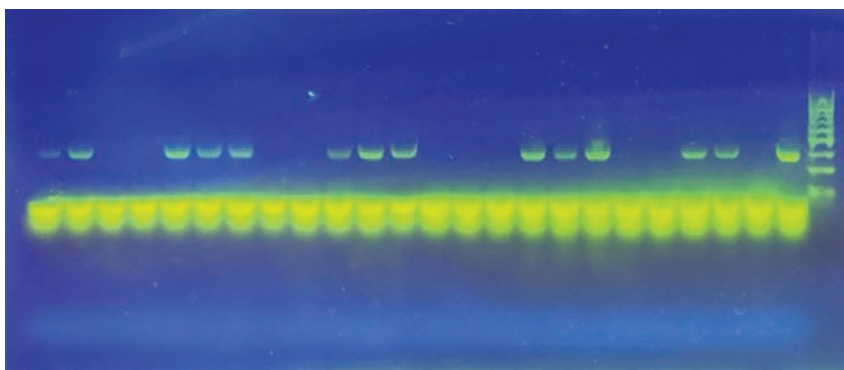


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Providing Scholarships

Providing agriculture with a future

Seed Trade Association has given \$60,500 in scholarships since 2011 to students who intend to pursue careers in agriculture. Of that, a total of \$9,000 was given to 10 students in 2023.

The Seed Trade Association of Arizona offers scholarships annually to qualifying students in the College of Agriculture, Life and Environmental Sciences at the University of Arizona and other institutions in the state and Imperial Valley. The funds are raised through the publication of the annual magazine, donations and the auction at the annual meeting.

Some scholarships are offered through a partnership with Yuma County Ag Producers scholarship program and are open to community college students, even freshmen and sophomores. Other scholarships for upper-level students are augmented by matching contributions from the Southern Seed Association and the American Seed Trade Association. Recipients are required to participate in internships.

Scholarship recipients for the 2023-24 school year include:



Jaisyn Wolfe

Jaisyn Wolfe, who attended the University of Arizona and Unity Environmental University, obtained a bachelor's degree in animal health and behavior.

"I was motivated by my love for animals and the opportunity to provide a service needed in our community," she said. She currently owns and operates her own mobile dog grooming business.

She received her scholarship at the end of 2022, enabling her to finish her final year of school by easing the financial obligation to obtain her degree.



Jay Ostberg

Jay Ostberg is a senior at the University of Arizona, majoring in agricultural education to become an agriscience teacher, "because I'm passionate about preparing students for agricultural careers in which they can contribute to efforts to take care of our planet while feeding its people."

Ostberg continued: "I was inspired by the amazing agriscience teachers I had in high school, two of whom attended the UA. This scholarship ensured that I am able to afford to attend school without needing to work at the same time. So I was able to focus all my energy on my studies, making me more prepared and knowledgeable when I enter my career."



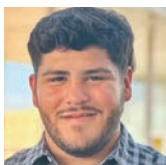
Paige Johnson

Paige Johnson is a senior at the University of Arizona, majoring in agricultural technology management and education. Her eventual goal is to apply her knowledge and experience in the agriculture industry to the classroom as an agriculture teacher.

"I hold teachers and education to the highest regards," she said.

"I believe there is little that is more important than investing in younger generations and ensuring they are knowledgeable and compassionate members of society who understand the importance of agriculture and the environment. ... I always knew I wanted to pursue a career that allowed me to create positive change, and I cannot think of a more important task than helping provide young adults the skills they need to be successful in their personal and professional lives."

The scholarship helped her focus on her education and eased the financial stress of pursuing student teaching this spring. She is currently student teaching at Desert Edge High School. "I sincerely appreciate the assistance," she said.

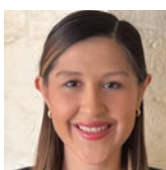


Servando E. Campos

Servando E. Campos currently is pursuing a bachelor's degree in agriculture systems management at the University of Arizona - Yuma.

"My motivation stems from my family background, as I grew up in a migrant family with limited resources," he said. "Throughout my childhood, my father worked in the agricultural industry to provide for me and my six siblings. I vividly remember accompanying him on weekend ride-alongs, where I had the opportunity to meet many individuals who supported and assisted my family. This experience has instilled in me a strong desire to give back to my community in the future."

Being a first-generation student, he has faced the challenges of juggling full-time studies and a full-time job. "The scholarship has been instrumental in affording me the opportunity to take additional classes, furthering my knowledge and skills and paving the way for a brighter future," he said.



Ivanna Valenzuela

Ivanna Valenzuela, an El Centro resident, is a senior at the University of Arizona - Yuma. She was motivated to pursue a degree in agricultural systems management because both of her parents work in the agriculture industry.

"I'm looking forward to joining the agriculture business industry," she said, noting that the scholarship helped her with expenses as she commuted the past two years while attending school in Arizona.



Byron Gagnon

Byron Gagnon, a recipient of a scholarship from the Seed Trade Association of Arizona, is grateful for the "incredible peace of mind" it provided him. The financial boost has allowed him to work fewer hours at his job so he could focus on school and

have some time for his family, friends and special interests.

Gagnon is a junior at the University of Arizona - Yuma, where he is majoring in sustainable plant systems with hopes to one day become a plant breeder. "I have no preference at the moment, though it will probably involve some kind of fruit tree," he said. He acquired his interest in agriculture and plant science in high school, "which carries on to this day. This program is fantastic and it being this close to home made the decision very easy."



Rhett Vance

Rhett Vance is a freshman at the University of Arizona, currently studying agriculture technology management. He hopes to gain his PCA license and work in Yuma.

"Growing up in Yuma, I've been surrounded by the agriculture industry my whole life," he said. "My main inspiration to work in this industry would be my grandpa, who started grape farming out in Whitewing, Arizona."

The STAA scholarship helped enable him to focus on his education and "stay driven toward my goals these next four years."

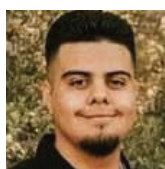


Elise Thelander

Elise Thelander is a junior at the University of Arizona, pursuing a major in agriculture technology management with a minor in sustainable plant systems. Upon graduating, she plans to pursue a master's degree, then move into production agriculture.

"Growing up in Yuma and around agriculture, I knew I wanted to be a part of it," she said. "I was always involved in 4-H and FFA when I was younger so I had a strong interest in everything relating to agriculture. In addition to this, throughout high school and college I have had the opportunity to work for Barkley Seed's quality assurance department, which has also inspired my agriculture major and minor."

The scholarship provided funds to help her pay for tuition, books and the various expenses that come with being in college.



Jorge Velasco

Jorge Velasco is a third- semester senior at the University of Arizona - Yuma, majoring in agricultural systems management.

"I was motivated to choose this major because agriculture has always been a part of my life," he said. "And I enjoy every aspect and all of the intricacies that make this industry possible."

So far, his career plans after college are undecided. "I am staying open to all possibilities as agriculture is a very broad industry," he said.

The Seed Trade scholarship is helping him continue his college education, "so that when I join this industry, I am bringing university-level knowledge to help me be successful."



Jake Richards

Jake Richards is a senior at the University of Arizona - Yuma, looking to graduate this spring with a degree in agricultural systems management.

"With ASM being a broad degree, I pursued it so I could have a variety of jobs to choose from," he said. "ASM could be used as an entry to many industries in agriculture."

While finishing school, he is working fulltime at Holaday Seed Company, specializing in product development in the desert Southwest. "I look forward to establishing myself at this company and learning as much as possible," he said. His goal is to transition into sales in the next five years.

The scholarship has helped keep him on track to graduate this spring. "I appreciate everything Seed Trade Association stands for and helping students like me achieve their goals," he concluded.



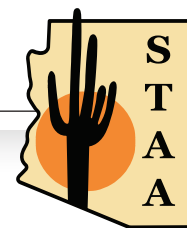
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2	Duane Palmer	1994	Yuma - Shilo Inn
3	Pat Hodges, Jr.	1995	Phoenix - Pointe Hilton Tapatio Cliffs
4	Larry Taylor	1996	Prescott - Prescott Resort
5	Ernie Milner	1997	Prescott - Prescott Resort
6	Rod Hallman	1998	Sedona - Poco Diablo Resort
7	Manny Martinez	1999	Gold Canyon - Gold Canyon Resort
8	Charlie Cain	2000	Tucson - Westin La Paloma Resort
9	Lynn Adams	2001	Tucson - Leows Ventana Canyon Resort
10	Michael Edgar	2002	San Diego - Embassy Suites, Mission Valley
11	Kevin Ford	2003	Sedona - Sedona Hilton Resort
12	John Hodges	2004	Chandler - Wild Horse Pass Resort
13	Tim Thompson	2005	Prescott - Prescott Resort
14	Denney McKay	2006	Tucson - Omni Tucson National Resort
15	Alan Rubida	2007	Tucson - Westward Look Resort
16	Barry Case	2008	Carefree - Carefree Resort
17	Ron Berens	2009	Tucson - Omni Tucson National Resort
18	Jon Pasquinnelli	2010	Tubac - Tubac Golf Resort & Spa
19	JP Tom Bodderij	2011	Litchfield Park - Wigwam Resort & Spa
20	Justin Smith	2012	Tucson - Hilton El Conquistador Golf & Tennis Resort
21	Jose Solorzano	2013	Tubac - Tubac Golf Resort & Spa
22	Pam Ferguson	2014	Tubac - Tubac Golf Resort & Spa
23	Doug Henry	2015	Scottsdale - Talking Stick Casino & Resort
24	Dean Wolfe	2016	Sedona - Hilton Resort at Bell Rock
25	Justin Lewis	2017	Tucson - Marriott Starr Pass Resort
26	Tim Butcher	2018	Scottsdale - McCormick Ranch
27	Justin Gillies	2019	Tucson - Westin La Paloma Resort
28	Chad Hefner	2020	Cancelled due to Covid-19 Pandemic
29	Sabrina Hallman	2021	Tubac - Tubac Golf Resort & Spa
30	Dwayne Alford	2024	Tucson - Leows Ventana Canyon Resort

Honorary Members

Patrick K. Hodges Sr. (2005)
Louis Didier (2007)
Duane Palmer (2007)
Larry Taylor (2007)
Allan B. Simons (2008)
Rod Hallman (2010)
Carrel Loveless (2013)
Kelly Keithly (2015)
Ernie Milner (2016)
Michael Edgar (2017)
Tom Tolman (2018)
Barry Case (2019)
Charles Cain (2020-21)
Tim Thompson (2022)
Denney McKay (2023)
Patrick Hodges Jr. (2024)



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Steve Ullrich

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s.ullrich@topnotchseed.com


About Top Notch Seeds Inc:

A leader in the Western United States seed industry, Top Notch Seeds is located in Brawley, California and specializes in innovative seed solutions including processing, sales and marketing both domestically and internationally. While the company has grown tremendously since its founding in 2007, its family owned customer-first service has remained the cornerstone of their operation.



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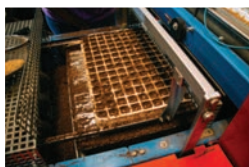
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Chad Hefner..... 928-215-9954
Justin Lewis..... 928-246-3411
Tyler Mead 928-446-5573
Charley Kemp 760-996-7085
Jerry Arce 760-562-8673

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Patrick Hodges Jr.

2024 Seed Trade Association of Arizona Honorary Member

While he hasn't been in the seed business for 20 years, Patrick Hodges Jr. has been named the 2024 Honorary Member by the Seed Trade Association of Arizona for his longtime and continuing support of the organization.

"It is an honor," he said of the recognition. "I have my foot off the seed industry but I keep my finger in it. I go to the annual spring conferences and attend the meetings. I keep up with a lot of first-hand knowledge through my brother and sons (his brother and one son are in the seed business, another son is in crop production)."

In addition, his wife, Tanya, is the Regional Academic Programs manager for the University of Arizona in Yuma. In that role, she is heavily involved in STAA's scholarship program and serves as an ex officio member of the board. "I'm her biggest advocate," Hodges said. "I'm always there to lend a hand and support her."

Hodges was a charter member of Arizona's Seed Trade Association founded in 1992, served as an original board member of the organization and was president in 1995.

His father, P.K. Hodges, who died in 2017, also had been involved in STAA over the years and was recognized as STAA's Honorary Member in 2005.

The younger Hodges obtained a bachelor's degree in agriculture plant science from the University of Arizona in 1985 and began his career as a sales representative in Yuma and Imperial Valley for H&H Seed Company Inc. The company was founded by his father and Phil Hornung in 1979 and became noted for its Bermuda grass seed program.

In 1999, Hodges became the owner and president of H&H Seed. Since the business was sold in 2003 to Barkley Seed, Hodges has been the agricultural land specialist in Yuma and Imperial Valley for A.T. Pancrazi Real Estate Services.



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Cheryl Sawyer, advisor (from left) and FFA team members Heaven Mancilla, Chelsea Larkin, Addison Levine and Kimberlee Till from Avondale won the Arizona State FFA Agronomy competition with the help of Barkley Seed.

Some of the seeds donated by Barkley Seed to the FFA agronomy team at AAEC Estrella Mountain High School.



Seeds to Success

BY JOYCE LOBECK

Seeds from Yuma played a part in an FFA team from Avondale winning the Arizona State FFA Agronomy competition.

As the state winner, the team from AAEC Estrella Mountain High School will now go on to represent Arizona in the national competition to be held in October in Indianapolis.

As one part of the competition, each team needed to identify 32 different seeds by sight. All four members of Estrella's team got a perfect score. They had an advantage - they had the actual seeds from the 32 different crops to study and touch, while their competitors had to rely on studying pictures of the seeds.

Cheryl Sawyer, FFA advisor for the school, recounted how that came about. She grew up in Yuma as part of the family that owned Ehrlich's Date Garden and graduated in 1990 from Yuma High School. She was good friends with the daughter of Robby Barkley, owner of Barkley Seed Inc. So she made a phone call to Barkley.

He took the request to Alan Rubida, seed production and quality assurance manager for the company. Rubida has fond memories of that list. As a college student, he and other members of the Agronomy Club would go out and collect plants for the seeds and sell them to FFA teams around South Dakota.

"I knew that list," he said, and began to collect or order all the seeds on it. "Robby Barkley always wants to help young people learn more about agriculture," Rubida said. "All it takes is a little nudge, a little help."

Before long a package arrived at Sawyer's office with the various seeds in beautiful glass bottles with labels. The seeds were for such crops as corn, cotton, watermelon, lettuce, wheat and various beans as well as crops that aren't grown here, like tobacco.

"But Barkley found them," Sawyer said. "It was way more than we expected. We were the only chapter in the state that had all of them. It really helped having them in person, much better than pictures. They were able to feel them and see the differences. They did so well because they had access to all of them."

Team member Addison Levine expressed appreciation to Barkley Seed for going to the extra effort to find all the types of seeds for them. "We studied our butts off. We really wanted to win."

Now she and fellow team members Heaven Mancilla, Chelsea Larkin and Kimberlee Till are looking forward to the national competition. ■



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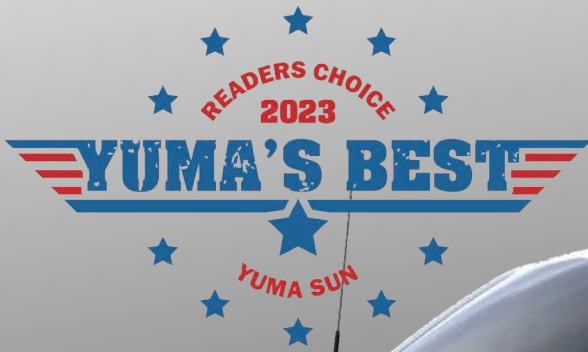
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