

## Graduate Student of the Month

Cristiana Rankrape, Ph.D. Student, Southern Illinois University

### What university do you attend and what is your research focus?

I am a PhD student at Southern Illinois University (SIU) under the guidance of Dr. Karla Gage. My research focuses on characterization of novel resistances to soybean herbicides in waterhemp (*Amaranthus tuberculatus*) and giant ragweed (*Ambrosia trifida*).



### What drew you to weed science?

When I started my undergraduate studies, back home in Brazil, I was looking for a professor to work with. A friend directed me to the weed scientist professor, and during my second week as an undergrad, I started volunteering in the weed science lab. This opportunity eventually led to a scholarship in the lab, allowing me to do a lot of research focused on weeds. As I pursued my PhD in the USA, it was clear to me that I wanted to continue working in the field of weed science.

### What is your favorite thing about the WSSA or your regional society?

I like the networking opportunities that the conferences offer, as well as all the ways you can get involved. I appreciate all the opportunities that my regional society NCWSS and WSSA society offers for students to expand their knowledge and get better prepared for our future career in weed science.

### What is your favorite weed and why?

My favorite weed is common waterhemp (*Amaranthus tuberculatus*) which is one of the weeds I am doing research on. It fascinates me it's remarkable ability to adapt and evolve herbicide resistance and makes us think on new ways to control it.

### What is your long-term goal?

My long-term goal after graduating is to pursue a career as a field weed scientist working for industry and be able to apply the knowledge I am gaining as a graduate student. I want to contribute to developing sustainable weed management solutions for farmers.

### If you want to add Cristiana Rankrape to your network, connect with Cristiana on:

LinkedIn: Cristiana Rankrape; E-mail: [cris.rankrape@siu.edu](mailto:cris.rankrape@siu.edu)

If you would like to be featured in the WSSA Graduate Student Organization newsletter or know an outstanding graduate student and want to nominate them, please send your suggestion to [vkumar4@huskers.unl.edu](mailto:vkumar4@huskers.unl.edu)

## WSSA Alumni Spotlight

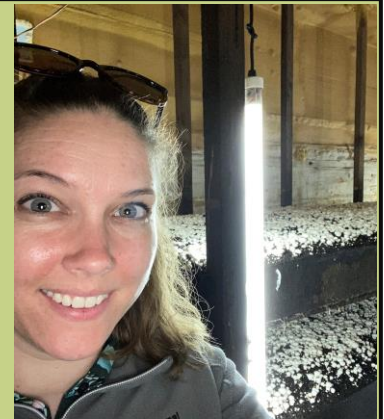
Katelyn Venner, Global Development Manager - Turf, Ornamentals, Forestry/IVM, BASF

### What Universities did you attend/ degrees did you earn?

I studied at Cook College (Rutgers University) for my B.Sc. in Plant Protection, and then continued on at Rutgers for a M. Sc. in Plant Biology (Weed Science). After that, I wandered down to Virginia Tech for my Ph.D. in Weed Science. All my degrees have a focus in turfgrass.

### What is your current job title and how long have you been with your current employer?

I started with BASF back in 2015, as a Technical Market Manager in the Professional & Specialty Solutions group of BASF Ag Products. Currently, I am a Global Development Manager managing product development projects across all indications in a number of market segments including: turf, ornamentals, forestry, ProVM, pasture, and home & garden.



### What is the favorite thing about your job so far?

The travel component is pretty awesome... That said, aside from the fact that the people I work with are wonderful, I really do love the diversity of projects I get to work on.

### What is something you wished you knew as a student that you know now?

Take care of yourself. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Most of all though, find the fun and soak it up. Enjoy making new friends, expanding your network, and the fact that you're doing something that most people won't do.

### What is the biggest piece of advice you'd give students searching for a job?

I've noticed is that the "fresh from graduation" candidates tend to struggle with behavior-based interviews. I can only speak for BASF, but when you make it to the in-person stage, we're really looking to see how you interact with others. Unlike grad school, we don't do anything alone, we collaborate on every single project or decision. Your thesis/dissertation isn't the focus necessarily. If you know people that work where you're interviewing, ask them how things are structured. Be yourself. Tell us how you work with others, how you collaborate to get things done.

### If you want to add Dr. Katelyn Venner to your network, connect with Katelyn on:

LinkedIn: Katelyn Venner; E-mail: katelyn.venner@basf.com

### WSSA GSO Contact Info

#### Isabel Werle

President – isabels6@illinois.edu

#### Navdeep Godara

Vice-President – ngodara@vt.edu

#### Vipin Kumar

Secretary – vkumar4@huskers.unl.edu

#### Ryan Hamberg

Social Media – ryan.hamberg@ag.tamu.edu

### Important Events & Dates

#### NCWSS Student Weed Contest

July 25 – Sheridan, IN

#### NEWSS Student Weed Contest

July 30 – Raleigh, NC

#### SWSS Student Weed Contest

August 7 – Blacksburg, VA

### Follow us on Social Media!



@WSSA\_GSO



@WSSAGSO



WSSA GSO

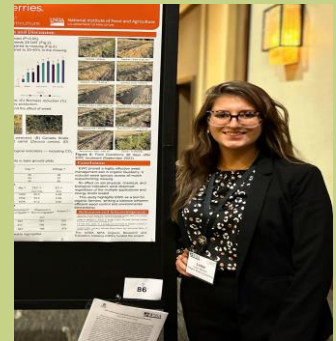
If you would like to nominate a WSSA alumni to be spotlighted in the WSSA Graduate Student Organization newsletter, please send your suggestion to [vkumar4@huskers.unl.edu](mailto:vkumar4@huskers.unl.edu)

## Graduate Student of the Month

Luisa Baccin, Ph.D. Student, Oregon State University

### What university do you attend and what is your research focus?

I am currently pursuing my PhD at Oregon State University under the guidance of Dr. Marcelo Moretti, specializing in Electrical Weed Control in organic highbush blueberries. Our research is dedicated to developing a sustainable weed management solution suitable for both organic and conventional farming. This innovative approach not only assists organic farmers in maintaining weed-free fields but also provides a viable alternative for conventional farming systems aiming to reduce reliance on herbicides.



### What drew you to weed science?

My journey into weed science began during my undergraduate studies in Brazil, where early on, I found myself immersed in projects exploring herbicide tolerance in GMO crops and testing various herbicides for weed control. As I progressed, memories of working alongside my father in our small farm in southern Brazil, pulling weeds and mowing the fields, came flooding back. Those experiences made me realize the importance of weed management in farming. They inspired me to pursue weed science, wanting to find better ways to help farmers deal with weeds and make their work easier.

### What is your favorite thing about the WSSA or your regional society?

What I value most about the regional meetings is the intimate atmosphere they provide. These gatherings offer a unique opportunity for students to engage with academia, extension professionals, and industry representatives on a more personal level. With fewer attendees compared to the national meeting, the WSSA meetings foster a sense of closeness and collaboration, allowing for meaningful connections with researchers in our region. The highlight for me is the student night out, where I have the chance to interact with individuals from both academia and industry. This informal setting not only facilitates networking but also encourages the exchange of ideas and experiences.

### What is your favorite weed and why?

My favorite weed is the Conyza. Throughout my master's and initial doctoral studies, I delved deeply into studying this complex species, and over time, I've grown fascinated by its remarkable ability to adapt and evolve. Its resilience in the face of various environmental conditions is inspiring. Moreover, I find the appearance of its seedlings and flowers particularly beautiful.

### What is your long-term goal?

My long-term goal is to leverage the expertise gained through my PhD to make meaningful contributions in either industry or extension services. I aim to be involved in the development of practical solutions for growers, bridging the gap between academia and the field. Whether it's through product development or direct collaboration with growers, my objective is to translate academic knowledge into actionable strategies that address real-world challenges in agriculture.

### If you want to add Luisa Baccin to your network, connect with Luisa on:

LinkedIn: Luisa Carolina Baccin; E-mail: [luisa.baccin@oregonstate.edu](mailto:luisa.baccin@oregonstate.edu)

If you would like to be featured in the WSSA Graduate Student Organization newsletter or know an outstanding graduate student and want to nominate them, please send your suggestion to [vkumar4@huskers.unl.edu](mailto:vkumar4@huskers.unl.edu)

## WSSA Alumni Spotlight

Liberty Galvin, Extension Weed Scientist, Oklahoma State University

### What Universities did you attend/degrees did you earn?

Oklahoma State University - BS Environmental Sciences, double minor in Soil Science and Agronomy  
 University of California Davis - MS International Agricultural Development  
 University of California Davis - PhD Horticulture and Agronomy, emphasis in Weed Science



### What is your current job title and how long have you been with your current employer?

Assistant Professor of Extension Weed Science and Precision Weed Management at Oklahoma State University. I started my current position in October 2023.

### What is the favorite thing about your job so far?

I have really enjoyed the welcoming atmosphere and the collaborative nature of the Plant and Soil Sciences Department.

### What is something you wished you knew as a student that you know now?

Giving and receiving feedback is an art form that very few people take time to perfect.

### What is the biggest piece of advice you'd give students searching for a job?

Don't take rejection personally. A company's decision to pick one person or another is not a reflection of others' abilities to do the job.  
 If there was ever a time in your life to talk about yourself and your accomplishments, the job application process is the place to do it!

### If you want to add Dr. Liberty Galvin to your network, connect with Dr. Galvin on:

LinkedIn: Liberty Galvin; E-mail: lbgalvin@okstate.edu

### WSSA GSO Contact Info

#### Isabel Werle

President – isabels6@illinois.edu

#### Navdeep Godara

Vice-President – ngodara@vt.edu

#### Vipin Kumar

Secretary – vkumar4@huskers.unl.edu

#### Ryan Hamberg

Social Media – ryan.hamberg@ag.tamu.edu

### Important Events & Dates

#### NCWSS Student Weed Contest

July 25 – Sheridan, IN

#### NEWSS Student Weed Contest

July 30 – Raleigh, NC

#### SWSS Student Weed Contest

August 7 – Blacksburg, VA

### Follow us on Social Media!



@WSSA\_GSO



@WSSAGSO



WSSA GSO

If you would like to nominate a WSSA alumni to be spotlighted in the WSSA Graduate Student Organization newsletter, please send your suggestion to vkumar4@huskers.unl.edu

## Graduate Student of the Month

Devanshi Desai, MS Student, Montana State University

### What university do you attend and what is your research focus?

I am pursuing my master's degree in Land Resources and Environmental Science at Montana State University (MSU) under the guidance of Dr. Lovreet Shergill. I joined MSU in the fall of 2023. My research focuses on developing strategies to manage herbicide-resistant weed species in Montana, utilizing precision weed management techniques and allelopathic tactics.



### What drew you to weed science?

Growing up on a small family farm, I was involved in agriculture from an early age. My father's dedication to the agricultural community deeply influenced me, and he encouraged me to pursue a career that would contribute to this vital sector. I pursued my bachelor's and master's in horticulture from Navsari Agricultural University. During my tenure as a Junior Research Fellow, I closely engaged with farmers and observed their struggles in controlling weeds to grow successful crops. Despite not having a background in weed science, I have always been curious about plant-weed competition. This experience strengthened my desire to choose weed science as my career focus. Fortunately, I got a scholarship from Dr. Lovreet

### What is your favorite thing about the WSSA or your regional society?

WSSA and Regional Societies provide me with a platform to showcase research and receive feedback. Moreover, these societies offer the opportunity to network with many working professionals in my field, facilitating valuable connections.

### What is your favorite weed and why?

Green foxtail is my favorite weed because of its unique aesthetic appeal and versatility as a dried flower in decorations. Although, it is also one of the most problematic weed species, with multiple herbicide resistance.

### What is your long-term goal?

My immediate goal after completing my master's degree is to pursue a PhD in weed science. I am eager to deepen my understanding of applied weed science, with a focus on precision weed management and agronomy. I also aspire to apply my skills in the industry.

### If you want to add Devanshi Desai to your network, connect with Devanshi on:

LinkedIn: Devanshi Desai; twitter: Devanshi Desai; E-mail:  
devanshi.desai@student.montana.edu

If you would like to be featured in the WSSA Graduate Student Organization newsletter or know an outstanding graduate student and want to nominate them, please send your suggestion to [vkumar4@huskers.unl.edu](mailto:vkumar4@huskers.unl.edu)

## WSSA Alumni Spotlight

Samuel Noe, Field Research Scientist, Valent USA LLC

### What Universities did you attend/ degrees did you earn?

I received my bachelor's degree in Agricultural Business from Murray State University in 2021. I completed a master's degree in Crop, Soil, and Environmental Sciences with emphasis in Weed Science from the University of Arkansas this summer.

### What is your current job title and how long have you been with your current employer?

Immediately after defending my thesis in June, I started a position with Valent USA as a Field Research Scientist working in weed science at the MidWest Agricultural Research Center.



### What is the favorite thing about your job so far?

My favorite thing about being a Field Scientist with Valent is getting to work with innovative new chemistry and being a small part of the team that gets to push new products into the pesticide market.

### What is something you wished you knew as a student that you know now?

One thing I wish I knew as a student would be that the connections you make in your time in graduate school are the beginning of your professional network, so take every opportunity to meet people in our field that you can.

### What is the biggest piece of advice you'd give students searching for a job?

Finding a job directly after graduate school can be tough, my advice would be to really work on putting together a quality resume and to be attentive to job posting websites, especially LinkedIn.

### If you want to add Samuel Noe to your network, connect with Samuel on:

LinkedIn: Samuel Noe

### WSSA GSO Contact Info

#### Isabel Werle

President – isabels6@illinois.edu

#### Navdeep Godara

Vice-President – ngodara@vt.edu

#### Vipin Kumar

Secretary – vkumar4@huskers.unl.edu

#### Ryan Hamberg

Social Media – ryan.hamberg@ag.tamu.edu

### Follow us on Social Media!



@WSSA\_GSO



@WSSAGSO



WSSA GSO

If you would like to nominate a WSSA alumni to be spotlighted in the WSSA Graduate Student Organization newsletter, please send your suggestion to [vkumar4@huskers.unl.edu](mailto:vkumar4@huskers.unl.edu)

## Graduate Student of the Month

Megan Mills Singletary, Ph.D. Student, Texas Tech University

### What university do you attend and what is your research focus?

I attend Texas Tech University in Lubbock, TX under the advisement of Dr. Peter Dotray. My dissertation research focuses on integrated weed management systems within organic cotton production. Over the next couple of years, I will be evaluating whether different cotton cultivars vary in their ability to suppress troublesome weeds, how to optimize weed control while reducing tillage events, and how best to integrate a finger weeder cultivator in cotton.



### What drew you to weed science?

I have always been fascinated by the crop protection sector, but my interest in weed science started after taking my first herbicide physiology course with Dr. Dotray. His passion for weed science is not only contagious, but he teaches in such a way that makes students want to become a part of the solution. I was and still am eager to expand my knowledge of weed control tactics and assist growers in their pursuit of weed-free fields. What started off as a suggested course to take from a colleague has now turned into a master's degree and PhD.

### What is your favorite thing about the WSSA or your regional society?

My favorite thing about being a WSSA member is the opportunity to learn from other weed scientists who come from a broad range of backgrounds. I am also apart of SWSS, which is an incredibly supportive student-centered society that is dedicated to the growth and development of young weed scientists.

### What is your favorite weed and why?

Although tough to choose just one, my favorite weed has to be velvetleaf (*Abutilon theophrasti*). I admire its intricate seedpod and delicate flowers. Plus, coming from an area where most weeds like to prick and sting you, it is nice to encounter something that is soft.

### What is your long-term goal?

I look forward to rejoining the private industry after receiving my PhD. As far as how I plan to use my skill set, I would like to work as a crop protection specialist for an agricultural biotechnology company. Having the role of a crop protection specialist will allow me to combine the two things that I am most passionate about, developing and enhancing crop protection technologies and educating growers on how best to implement these new tactics into their cropping systems.

### If you want to add Megan Singletary to your network, connect with Devanshi on:

LinkedIn: Megan Mills Singletary; E-mail: mil09024@ttu.edu

If you would like to be featured in the WSSA Graduate Student Organization newsletter or know an outstanding graduate student and want to nominate them, please send your suggestion to [vkumar4@huskers.unl.edu](mailto:vkumar4@huskers.unl.edu)

## WSSA Alumni Spotlight

Ram Yadav, Assistant Professor of Specialty Crop Weed Science, The Ohio State University



### What Universities did you attend/ degrees did you earn?

PhD: Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa. Major: Weed Science

MS: Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, India. Major: Weed Science

BS: Maharana Pratap Universities of Agriculture and Technology, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India. Major: Agriculture

### What is your current job title and how long have you been with your current employer?

Assistant Professor of Specialty Crop Weed Science at The Ohio State University, Wooster, OH. I started my current position in August 2024.

### What is the favorite thing about your job so far?

Diversity of weed management practices in specialty crops: I am transitioning my focus from major agronomic crops to specialty crops, where crop diversity offers an excellent opportunity to practice diversified weed management strategies.

### What is something you wished you knew as a student that you know now?

Grant writing and budgeting.

### What is the biggest piece of advice you'd give students searching for a job?

Get involved in all the three pillars of a land grant university, research, teaching, and extension.

### If you want to add Dr. Ram Yadav to your network, connect with Ram on:

LinkedIn: Ram Yadav; X: OurWeeds E-mail: yadav.206@osu.edu

### WSSA GSO Contact Info

#### Isabel Werle

President – isabels6@illinois.edu

#### Navdeep Godara

Vice-President – ngodara@vt.edu

#### Vipin Kumar

Secretary – vkumar4@huskers.unl.edu

#### Ryan Hamberg

Social Media – ryan.hamberg@ag.tamu.edu

### Follow us on Social Media!



@WSSA\_GSO



@WSSAGSO



WSSA GSO

If you would like to nominate a WSSA alumni to be spotlighted in the WSSA Graduate Student Organization newsletter, please send your suggestion to vkumar4@huskers.unl.edu



## Graduate Student of the Month

Gagandeep Kaur, Ph.D. student, Clemson University

### What university do you attend and what is your research focus?

I am a PhD student at Clemson University, SC, working under the supervision of Dr. Nishanth Tharayil. My research focuses on the intricate mechanisms behind herbicidal (stress) memory in Palmer amaranth. By examining how this weed responds to low-dose herbicidal stress, I am exploring the molecular processes that enable it to 'remember' the stress and react more effectively to future stressors.



### What drew you to weed science?

I have always been intrigued by the challenges that weeds pose to agriculture. During my BS in Agricultural Sciences, I learned about various plant pests, including insects, pathogens, and weeds. My master's research then focused on the biological control of insects and pathogens that impact crop yields and quality. Afterward, I worked as an Agriculture Extension Specialist, where I realized how difficult it is for farmers to manage problematic weeds. Even with multiple herbicidal applications, these weeds remain tough to control. I always wondered, 'How do these weeds survive and thrive despite so much herbicidal pressure?' These experiences led me to understand that effectively tackling crop production challenges requires managing all major threats, including weeds. This is how I entered the world of Weed Science.

### What is your favorite thing about the WSSA or your regional society?

Although I have only been with the WSSA since last summer, I am really impressed by how the association organizes its annual meetings, whether on its own or in collaboration with regional societies. What I appreciate most is how the WSSA brings together a diverse group of researchers and professionals to communicate and share their findings. Overall, being part of this community has greatly boosted my growth and enthusiasm in the field.

### What is your favorite weed and why?

My favorite weed is Palmer amaranth, which is a central focus of my PhD research. It stands out not only because of its notorious resistance to a wide array of herbicides but also due to the unique lessons it provides about resilience and adaptation. This weed exemplifies how organisms can evolve and thrive under harsh conditions. Its remarkable ability to develop herbicide-resistance mechanisms highlights its adaptability and survival skills.

### What is your long-term goal?

My long-term goal is to become a Weed Ecophysiologicalist, focusing on understanding the fundamental biology of herbicidal resistance in weeds to develop effective and reliable weed management strategies. I aim to pursue a career in either industry or academia, with the primary objective of contributing to food security and agricultural sustainability. I am excited to collaborate with interdisciplinary professionals to address complex crop production challenges from multiple angles and develop more effective solutions to problems posed by weeds.

### If you want to add Gagandeep Kaur to your network, connect with Devanshi on:

LinkedIn: Gagandeep Kaur; E-mail: [kgagand@g.clemson.edu](mailto:kgagand@g.clemson.edu); X: gagank1597

If you would like to be featured in the WSSA Graduate Student Organization newsletter or know an outstanding graduate student and want to nominate them, please send your suggestion to [vkumar4@huskers.unl.edu](mailto:vkumar4@huskers.unl.edu)

## WSSA Alumni Spotlight

Marty Schraer, Senior R&D Scientist, Syngenta

### What Universities did you attend/ degrees did you earn?

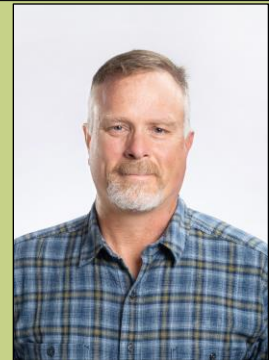
Proud member of the Fightin' Texas Aggie Corps of Cadets; Squadron 1 XO, Class of 1993

B.S. and M.S. degrees in Entomology from Texas A&M University

Thesis project focused on pecan weevil emergence in relation to soil hardness (under the direction of Dr. Marvin Harris).

Ph.D. from Mississippi State University

Dissertation research focused the environmental fate of s-metolachlor and cyanazine in the surface waters of the Mississippi Delta (under the direction of Dr. David Shaw).



### What is your current job title and how long have you been with your current employer?

I began my career as an R&D scientist as the station Weed Scientist at Zeneca's Southern Regional Technical Center in Leland, MS. I'm currently a Senior R&D Scientist with Syngenta with responsibility for in-house, private, and public research coordination in ID, OR, UT, & NV. I'm responsible for research in the areas of Weed Science, Entomology, Plant Pathology, Nematology, and Soil and Plant Health. I've been with Syngenta and legacy companies for 25 years.

### What is the favorite thing about your job so far?

My answer the last time I formally answered this question was "My Boss...is 2,413 miles away and no 2 days are the same. The territory field scientist operates autonomously for the most part. My territory is quite agriculturally diverse and the way it's managed provides a wide variety of experiences and relationships.

### What is something you wished you knew as a student that you know now?

I wish I'd understood the importance of growing and developing my family over my professional life.

### What is the biggest piece of advice you'd give students searching for a job?

Look for a job you want to do with a group of like-minded people. The money will come in time, but that cannot replace the joy you will find in the job you love

### If you want to add Dr. Marty Schraer to your network, connect with Marty on:

LinkedIn: Marty Schraer

### WSSA GSO Contact Info

#### Isabel Werle

President  
[isabels6@illinois.edu](mailto:isabels6@illinois.edu)

#### Navdeep Godara

Vice-President  
[ngodara@vt.edu](mailto:ngodara@vt.edu)

#### Vipin Kumar

Secretary  
[vkumar4@huskers.unl.edu](mailto:vkumar4@huskers.unl.edu)

#### Ryan Hamberg

Social Media  
[ryan.hamberg@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:ryan.hamberg@ag.tamu.edu)

### Important Events & Dates

#### Fall Webinar: A Workflow for Reproducible Data Analysis and Visualization in R

October 22 and 29, 2:30 PM CST

#### Student Workshop: Bring your message out of the weeds

November 4, 1:30 PM CST

#### 2025 WSSA Graduate Student Travel Award

Application deadline: November 15, 2024

### Follow us on Social Media!



@WSSA\_GSO



@WSSAGSO



WSSA GSO

If you would like to nominate a WSSA alumni to be spotlighted in the WSSA Graduate Student Organization newsletter, please send your suggestion to [vkumar4@huskers.unl.edu](mailto:vkumar4@huskers.unl.edu)