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Your Two Cents (Y2C)



www.ars.usda.gov/yourtwocents

Happy 2015 from Y2C! We hope you had a restful holiday. We've started some "New Year, New Y2C" initiatives, so expect big changes soon. The first is that some of our Focus Group members will be "retiring" from their roles in Y2C, and we'll be scouring the agency for people to replace them. Watch your inbox for details.

You might have noticed that [resolved ideas](#) on Y2C are now sorted by the date they were resolved (newest first), as many of you asked for. We hope this makes it a little easier to follow your ideas.

This time of year at Headquarters is all about budget. We have done our part for the President's budget, which is due to be released the first week of February. Meanwhile, we are gearing up for the budget hearings that will take place soon after. Dr. Jacobs-Young has to take a lot of information to those hearings to make sure the appropriations committees know how valuable we are to the ag community. We're also writing annual reports for each National Program to tell our customers and stakeholders what we did in 2014. Fortunately, you give us a lot to talk about! ❖

Please submit story ideas and national award items to Sue Kendall, sue.kendall@ars.usda.gov, or call 301-504-1623.

Please submit photos for Photo Corner to Carol Nathan, carol.nathan@ars.usda.gov, or call 301-504-1649.

Axon—the ARS Intranet



We're happy to announce that Axon will be featured in the March 23, 2015, Inform and Engage Webinar. We'll go through the site, see

some key features, and talk about the future. Log-in information will be sent closer to the time. What would you like to hear about? Send us an e-mail to axon@ars.usda.gov with questions you would like answered during the webinar. Did you know you can access recordings, transcripts, and presentations of past webinars on [Axon's Inform and Engage page](#)?

New pages and content are added daily, so check out the home page for "What's New on Axon" and Announcements!

Axon URL: <https://axon.ars.usda.gov>

Username: arsnet\firstname.lastname

Password: (same password as email) ❀

Ethics

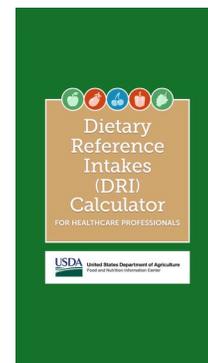
Job hunting? Federal ethics law does not prohibit or even discourage Executive Branch employees from seeking employment in the private sector. However, in limited instances, contacts with potential employers may raise conflict-of-interest concerns with respect to an employee's government job. Employees should review the [Standards of Ethical Conduct, Section 2635.604, Disqualification While Seeking Employment](#), prior to negotiating prospective employment with any organization dealt with in their official capacity.

Considering retirement? You may be planning to spend all your time on the golf course. But if you plan to seek a job, check out [these links](#) for some useful information. Your Agency/Area Ethics Advisor can assist you in interpreting and applying post-employment restrictions. A list of Agency Ethics Contacts can be found [here](#). ❀

Around ARS

New Nutrition App Launched

The National Agricultural Library's Food and Nutrition Information Center (FNIC) Web and Reference Team launched a new app on January 12. The *Dietary Reference Intakes (DRI) Calculator for Healthcare Professionals* provides a convenient and user-friendly format for healthcare professionals to access nutrient calculations and recommendations based on DRI values. The app, titled "USDA DRI Calculator for Healthcare Professionals," can be downloaded from [FNIC's homepage](#) or from the [iTunes](#) or [Google Play](#) stores. It is free and available for iPhone, iPad, and Android devices. ❀



Pomegranate Field Day



On October 2, 2014, scientists from the ARS Water Management Research Unit, in Parlier, CA, co-organized and presented at the 2014 Pomegranate Field Day held at the [University of California Kearney Agricultural Research and Extension Center](#). Research findings on water and nitrogen use and tree growth were reported, and all event participants toured the research orchard. Approximately 40 individual growers, farming company personnel, and university extension specialists attended. ❀

Notable Awards



Photo Corner

Scheffler Wins Major Cotton Award



Jodi Scheffler.

Geneticist **Jodi Scheffler**, with the Jamie Whitten Delta States Research Center in Stoneville, MS, is the recipient of the 2014 Cotton Genetics Research Award. The award was presented on January 6 during the National Cotton

Council-coordinated 2015 Beltwide Cotton Conferences, held in San Antonio, TX. Scheffler received a plaque and a monetary award in recognition of her impressive record of outstanding service in cotton genetics research. Her research focuses on developing cotton lines that have genetic resistance to diseases, most notably Cotton Leaf Curl Virus (CLCuV), which USDA has listed as a critical threat to U.S. agriculture. ❁

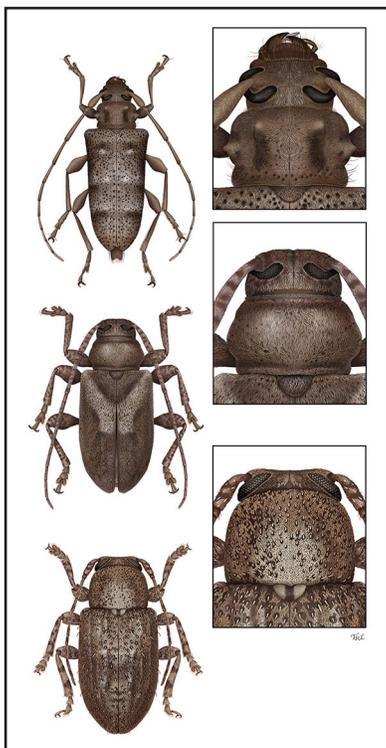


Sunrise at the USDA-ARS San Joaquin Valley Agricultural Sciences Center in Parlier, CA. Photo by Craig Wilson, Texas A&M University.



This photo of beautiful metallic-blue *Morpho* butterflies from the National Collections of Insects and Mites was featured on the June 2002 cover of *Agricultural Research* magazine. Photo by Peggy Greb of the ARS Information Staff.

Did You Know?



Cerambycid beetles, drawn by Taina Litwak.

Taina Litwak's steady hand and attention to detail are prized commodities at the ARS Systematic Entomology Laboratory (SEL) in Washington, D.C. An ARS scientific illustrator there, Litwak is tasked with creating scientifically accurate drawings and paintings of insect and mite specimens—some smaller than a pinhead. Her artwork is an important component of the entomology staff's research to identify, describe, and classify new insect and mite species, especially those with potential as invasive pests.

Systematics, together with taxonomy, Litwak notes, "is a critically important element in understanding biodiversity, wider studies of ecosystems, environmental change over time, and change brought on by human endeavors, including the introduction of invasive species."

Her illustration process starts with pencil drawings—done with the aid of either a dissecting or light-transmitting microscope. Positioning the specimen can be challenging, especially if it consists of tiny dissected parts floating around in glycerin or alcohol. After finishing a drawing, she scans it into a digital format using Adobe Photoshop.

A simple line drawing might take Litwak half an hour to complete, a full-color individual species 3 days, and a complex plate with many images several weeks. She estimates she has produced thousands of insect illustrations over the past 30 years, many since joining SEL in 2010.

Recent examples include illustrations of three new species of bark beetle from the Dominican Republic, identified by SEL entomologist Steve Lingafelter, and minute wasps in the genus *Perischus*, which parasitize certain flies that lay eggs in cucurbit crops, like melon and cucumber.

Litwak's illustrations typically accompany papers published by SEL scientists and their colleagues in peer-reviewed journals. But other outlets have included the pages of science and technology textbooks for middle schools.

The quality of her drawings and paintings have also won her accolades, including a 2014 award for excellence in "Graphics Media: Natural Science Illustration" from the BioCommunications Association for her renderings of wood-boring Cerambycid beetles (shown here).

"I really love the visual variety of insects, their forms, and the beauty and precision of their exoskeletons," says Litwak, adding. "I love what I do, because I am always learning."

Written By **Jan Suszkiw**, ARS Information Staff.

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