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Occupation: Assistant Professor, Dalhousie University Faculty of Agriculture

Previous work and volunteer experience in Weed Science: I have worked with weeds since graduating from my B.Sc. in 2000, and a little bit before that during my time as a summer student at the AAFC research station in Nappan, Nova Scotia.



My first job after graduating university was helping with herbicide screening trials in cranberries in Nova Scotia with Glen Sampson. A very interesting job and a very interesting crop to get my feet wet with weeds and herbicides. There were a lot of rushes and sedges in the research plots, which was a tough group of weeds for a novice with a B.Sc. in Environmental Science to jump into! This job introduced me to many different types of herbicides, and I can still remember the first time I ever measured out Prowl for plot work. I remember becoming very interested in how the herbicides affected the weeds and cranberries, and was quite amazed at the range of symptomology that was presented in the plots as we were working with a range of MOA's at the time. This was also the job where I did my first small plot herbicide applications and learned how to use a plot sprayer, CO2 tanks, regulators, etc. I was more nervous during that first herbicide application than I have been for any presentation.

I did this job for one field season before beginning my M.Sc. looking at spatial and temporal variability of weeds in lowbush blueberry fields in Nova Scotia. Although this project never really came together in the right way, it re-introduced me to lowbush blueberry production (my grandparents ran harvesting crews back in the days of hand harvesting and we raked blueberries as kids sometimes) and the sheer range of weeds present in that production system. I also worked with Glen during my time as a M.Sc. student to run a Nova Scotia Agricultural College (NSAC) Weed Science Team that used to attend the North Eastern Weed Science Competition in the USA. We ran that team for 3 years and got to go to competitions in Pennsylvania, Carolina, and Virginia if I remember correctly. Our team struggled against the bigger universities, but we always had fun and learned a lot from those competitions. I also met Dr. Clarence Swanton for the first time on these trips.

After completing my M.Sc. I worked as a research technician with Dr. Nathan Boyd at the NSAC who started working as a Vegetation Management Research Chair in lowbush blueberry around the time I completed my M.Sc. This was a great job and Nathan was a great mentor who helped me tremendously in terms of honing my writing skills and contributing to manuscript preparation and experimental design. Nathan introduced me to Dr. Rene Van Acker at the 2008 CWSS meeting in Banff and that started my path towards a Ph.D. in Plant Agriculture at the University of Guelph under the supervision of Nathan and Rene.

How did you become involved with CWSS and when?

I became involved in CWSS during my M.Sc. when I attended my first CWSS meeting in Niagara Falls in 2007. I won a travel award to attend that meeting and really enjoyed the event. It was my first large scientific conference so of course I was terrified for my presentation (not as scared as I was of screwing up that first spray), but it was a great experience and really opened my eyes to the size of CWSS and the complexity of research topics associated with weeds. This discipline is truly unique in the diversity of research topics that collectively contribute to our overall goals of understanding the biology, ecology, and management of weeds.

What has the extent of your involvement been? (i.e. have you served on committees/executive?)

I was the graduate student rep on the board for a few years during my Ph.D., which was my first involvement on the board. I was also part of the membership committee during this time. Since then I have also served as the Research Rep on the board and helped organize (with much help from the board and LAC I must add!) and serve as master of ceremonies for the awards banquet at the annual meeting. Serving on the BOD at CWSS is very enjoyable. It does require work and time, but the board is comprised of friends and colleagues that work hard collectively towards the goal of running CWSS as best as possible. I highly recommend it to anyone considering it.

Favorite memory/experience in your weed science career to date?

That is a very tough one as I have been working with weeds since 2003! However I must say that my favorite experience to date was my trip back to Guelph in fall 2013 to defend my PhD thesis. Me and my now wife Joanna travelled to Guelph and stayed for a few days and I was just in a good headspace the day of my defense. I had a wonderful supervisory committee and had worked very hard on my PhD and ultimately it was just a good day talking about weeds. Guelph also has good beer, which didn't hurt either, and I really wanted my grad student mug!

What is your favorite weed and why?

That is a toss-up between red sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*) and hair fescue (*Festuca filiformis*). Ultimately I have to go with red sorrel as it was the weed of focus in my PhD and exhibits very unique ecology in lowbush blueberry fields. Red sorrel is a creeping herbaceous perennial but exhibits very different ecology than typical similar plants, which presents a range of unique management opportunities. It is a wonderful example of a weed in which improved knowledge of the ecology of this species has truly been the basis for all current management tactics and new research, leading to hypothesis-driven approaches to the management of this weed in lowbush blueberry fields.

What are your career goals/future plans in weed science (if you are comfortable sharing)?

My main goal right now is to try and continue surviving trying to be a weed scientist at a university! It really is a tough go in the university system and it can really wear you down over time. My main solace is the fact that I love working in agriculture and working with growers to find solutions to problems, and there is nothing better than hopping in the truck and heading out on the open road to a blueberry field where no one can bother me!