

Graduate Student of the Month

Lalit Mohan, M.S. Student – Kansas State University

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

I'm currently pursuing my master's at Kansas State University, where my research focuses on optimizing glufosinate application in soybeans to better control Palmer amaranth. It's a major issue for Kansas farmers, and I'm proud my work can help farmers with more effective, practical weed control.



What drew you to weed science?

My interest in weed science began in elementary school when I saw my grandfather removing *Phalaris minor* from his wheat field. I asked why he was pulling out plants, and he told me there are "good plants" and "bad plants." I was fascinated by the idea that some plants could harm crops, and I felt upset that they were making his work harder. That simple moment sparked a deep curiosity in me, and over time, it grew into a passion for understanding weeds to support farmers like my grandfather.

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

My favorite thing about WSSA is that it brings all people from the community together, acknowledges talent and create a space for everyone to be themselves and foster meaningful collaboration.

What is your favorite weed and why?

My favorite weed is *Amaranthus palmeri* (Palmer amaranth). It's a tough and stubborn plant—fast-growing, resistant to many herbicides, and incredibly hard to control. As frustrating as it is for farmers, that's exactly what makes it fascinating to me. It challenges everything we know about weed management and pushes us to keep learning and improving. It's like a worthy opponent that keeps the field of weed science exciting and full of purpose.

What is your long-term goal?

My long-term goal is to address real problems faced by farmers and help reduce agricultural losses, especially those caused by weeds. I want to develop practical, affordable weed management solutions that farmers can actually use—not just in research plots, but in real fields.

If you want to add Lalit Mohan to your network, connect with Lalit on:

LinkedIn: [Lalit Mohan](#) Email: fnulalit@ksu.edu

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WSSA GSO Alumni Spotlight

Victor Ribeiro, Assistant Professor, Oregon State University



What Universities did you attend/ degrees did you earn?

I graduated from the Federal University of Jequitinhonha and Mucuri Valleys in Brazil with a BS in Agronomy in 2018 and a MS degree in Crop Production in 2020. During my master's program, I completed an exchange period at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, which led to a two-year research program. I then earned my Ph.D. in Crop Science from Oregon State University in 2024.

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

I am an Assistant Professor and Extension Weed Specialist for field crops at Oregon State University. I started in this role in September 2024

What is the favorite thing about your job so far?

I get to work closely with growers & stakeholders across Oregon to understand their top weed management challenges in a wide range of field crops, including grass grown for seed, clovers, cereals, mint, and others. It's been exciting learning about such a diverse production system. I also enjoy the outreach aspect of my role, where I can share research findings and hear directly from growers about the issues they're facing. There's always something new to explore, which makes job dynamic and rewarding.

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

I wish I had received more training in budgeting, grant writing, project and personnel management. These are essential skills that play a major role in an academic career but often aren't emphasized in graduate programs. I strongly encourage students interested in academia to seek out workshops, mentorship, or any hands-on experience in these areas while still in school.

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

Take every opportunity to develop a broad skill set and gain experience with different cropping systems. It will give you a solid foundation and help you stand out in the job market. Studying at different institutions, doing internships in various regions/ countries, and collaborating with scientists from different backgrounds can offer valuable perspectives. Also, invest time in building your professional network. Once you identify the kind of job you want, try to gain as much experience as possible in that direction. It'll make a big difference when the right opportunity comes along.

If you want to add Dr. Victor Riberio to your network, connect with him on:

LinkedIn: [Victor Ribeiro](#)

Important Events & Dates:

- July 14- 17 - Aquatic Plant Management Society (APMS), Providence, RI
- July 29 – Northeastern Weed Science Society Weed Contest, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC
- July 30-31 - North Central Weed Science Society Weed Contest, BASF Midwest Research Farm, Seymour, IL
- August 8 - Southern Weed Science Society Weed Contest, University of Arkansas, Newport, AR

Congratulations to the 2025 WSSA Travel Enrichment Experience Winners:

- Vipin Kumar – University of Nebraska
- Preetaman Bajwa – Cornell University
- Ryan Hamberg – Texas A&M University
- Cole Wollard – Texas Tech University
- Francielli S de Oliveira – Utah State University

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Graduate Student of the Month

Tong Zhen, Ph.D. Candidate – UC Davis

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

I am a Ph.D. Candidate from UC Davis, working with Dr. Brad Hanson. My research focus is non-chemical weed control in orchard systems, and my dissertation work is the evaluation of electrical weed control in California organic almonds and blueberries.

**What drew you to weed science?**

I read a book called *The One-Straw Revolution* by Masanobu Fukuoka, which my uncle recommended when I was in high school. Since then, I have been really into farming, as a kid who grew up in the city and had only played farming simulation games before. Then, I took a weed science class at UC Davis during my senior year, and I felt like this could be my career. I enjoy working with weed scientists in general because they all are passionate.

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

I think WSSA and the regional society allow me to connect with more peers in weed science. There are also a lot of support and networking opportunities from the societies to help me become a successful weed scientist.

What is your favorite weed and why?

I don't have a favorite weed, and maybe that is one reason why I am into weed science. Instead of growing them, my work is to control them in the field. I also enjoy zapping weeds in the almond orchard since it is really satisfying. I have a favorite weed to zap (treat with electricity), which is field bindweed. They actually smell really good when they are toasted.

What is your long-term goal?

I would like to do more extension work and become an extensionist. I noticed that there are a lot of new weed control technologies becoming available on the market or being developed. My goal is to help growers adopt and utilize new technologies in their production. Maybe that can help lower food prices by reducing weed control costs. I know that might not be possible, but it wouldn't hurt if it could keep me working.

If you want to add Tong to your network, connect with him on:

LinkedIn: [Tong Zhen](#) **Email:** tzhen@ucdavis.edu

WSSA GSO Alumni Spotlight

Tristen Avent, Field Development & Technical Services, UPL



What Universities did you attend/ degrees did you earn?

University of Tennessee at Martin: BS in Agriculture (Agriculture Engineering Technology)
 University of Arkansas: MS in Crop, Soil, and Environmental Sciences (Weed Science)
 University of Arkansas: PhD in Crop, Soil, and Environmental Sciences (Weed Science)

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

Field Development and Technical Services for UPL Corporation Ltd. Territory includes CO, NM, TX, OK, AR, LA, the bootheel of MO, and West TN. I officially started on May 12, 2025.

What is the favorite thing about your job so far?

Learning more outside the weed science discipline and the agriculture practices outside of the midsouth.

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

Regulatory policy. Not that I was unfamiliar, but rather more training. I am responsible for reviewing and editing labels. It's a team effort with great support, but prior experience capturing minute details would have been beneficial.

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

Help your fellow students, collaborate across disciplines if possible, and don't be afraid to get involved in additional projects. There are many times that I am in situations that I recall experiences throughout graduate school that can lend technical advice towards a current situation. Many of those times, it was not directly related to my research, but rather when I was assisting another student or managing a company's research trial. I would also tell you that in technical services, you may have been a trained weed scientist, but now you are asked to be an entomologist, agronomist, pathologist, etc... The more experience you gain throughout your studies, the more expertise you can lend as a future colleague in your profession.

Congratulations to the 2025 WSSA Travel Enrichment Experience Award Winners:

- Vipin Kumar – University of Nebraska
- Preetaman Bajwa – Cornell University
- Ryan Hamberg – Texas A&M University
- Cole Wollard – Texas Tech University
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Graduate Student of the Month

Abigail Norsworthy, M.S. Student – Purdue University

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

I am currently pursuing my M.S. at Purdue University under the advisement of Dr. Bryan Young. My research focuses on differentiating bleaching herbicides in soybean production using multi- and hyperspectral imaging. I place a particular emphasis on mesotrione carryover and preemergence applications of diflufenican and metribuzin, as well as their effects on weed control and herbicide interactions.

**What drew you to weed science?**

I was drawn to weed science during an internship with Corteva between my sophomore and junior year, where I worked with outstanding field scientists. At the time, I hadn't taken a weed science class, but they taught me the fundamentals of the field that I still use today and instilled a passion for research that I haven't been able to shake since.

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

My favorite aspect of both WSSA and NCWSS is the sense of community and collaboration. Being part of the society allows me to connect with researchers, extension specialists, and industry professionals who share the same passion for solving real-world weed management problems. The networking, mentorship, and opportunity to exchange ideas is incredibly valuable.

What is your favorite weed and why?

My favorite weed is common chickweed (*Stellaria media*). It was the first weed I learned to identify outside of a classroom, around the greenhouse back in Arkansas. It's a weed I've been excited to see ever since.

What is your long-term goal?

My long-term goal is to pursue a career in industry as a field scientist, where I can help implement innovative weed management strategies. I am particularly interested in developing solutions that not only maximize herbicide efficacy but also ensure crop safety.

If you want to add Abigail to your network, connect with her on:

LinkedIn: [abigail-norsworthy](#) **Email:** anorswo@purdue.edu

WSSA GSO Alumni Spotlight

Garrison Gundy, Field Market Development Specialist, Valent

What Universities did you attend/ degrees did you earn?

Kansas State University: BS in Agronomy (Consulting and Production)
 Kansas State University: MS in Agronomy (Weed Science)

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

Field Market Development Specialist with Valent USA. My territory includes KS, NE, and CO. I have been in this role for 3 years and was a research scientist at our research center in Illinois for 4 years.



What is the favorite thing about your job so far?

Being a FMD with Valent provides a unique opportunity of dealing with early-stage molecules in the pipeline all the way to commercial sales of the formulated products. I like having an influence on all stages of developing a new product.

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

Always have a solution mindset. Focus on proactive and positive approaches to all aspects of life. We face many obstacles in both our professional and personal lives and shifting to a solution mindset will make you a better leader and a better teammate.

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

Build and utilize your network. Do not be intimidated to reach out to industry individuals or others in your network for more information or help. It is extremely valuable to have your network reaching out to you when roles come open. You may also learn about other career opportunities that may be a better fit for you.

Upcoming Webinar:

- **Extension Communication & Writing in Weed Science**

Topics covered - How does extension work, understanding the link between extension and impactful research, translating research into actionable extension materials, and how to engage diverse audiences

Speaker – Dr. Stanley Culpepper, Professor, University of Georgia

When - Tuesday October 7th, 2025, 1:00 EST

Registration - [RSVP Link](#) to get zoom access. Registration deadline – Sept 30

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Graduate Student of the Month

Kai Goble PhD Student – North Carolina State University

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

I am a PhD student at NC State University advised by Dr. Katie Jennings in the small fruits and vegetable weed science program. My research primarily focuses on chemical weed management in sweetpotato and a survey of weeds in sweetpotato across North Carolina. I also have had the opportunity to work with weed control in a variety of other specialty crops including tomato, Irish potato, and watermelon.

**What drew you to weed science?**

Despite having no agricultural background, I was always interested in plants and growing my own food. Through my time as an undergraduate at Iowa State University I was exposed to weed science and was fascinated by the persistent nature in which weeds survive. I found a deep interest in learning about how to kill undesired plants in order to protect desired plants.

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

As a member of WSSA and SWSS I have enjoyed the sense of community that the societies provide. The societies provide a great opportunity to meet other students who share the same interests despite coming from diverse backgrounds.

What is your favorite weed and why?

My two favorite weeds are Russian thistle and common mullein. I was amazed watching Russian thistle tumble across Eastern Oregon and Washington during an internship and it solidified my interest in weed science. As for common mullein I just like the large soft leaves.

What is your long-term goal?

My long-term goal is to provide growers with solutions to troublesome weeds through extension programs and applied research. I hope to work in academia and lead a research program creating integrated weed management plans that include a variety of control tactics.

If you want to add Kai to your network, connect with him on:

LinkedIn: [Kai Goble](#) **Email:** kjgoble@ncsu.edu

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WSSA GSO Alumni Spotlight

Adam Leise, On-Farm Research Network Manager, University of Nebraska

What Universities did you attend/ degrees did you earn?

I attended University of Nebraska Lincoln, earning a bachelor's degree in Ag Economics in 2019, and an MS in Agronomy in 2024. My focus was utilizing See and Spray equipment to maximize herbicide savings and reduce herbicide antagonism.

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

My current job is Nebraska On-Farm Research Network Manager, working for the University of Nebraska Extension division. I've been in this position for a little over a year. This role provides a structured network where farmers can test products, cropping systems & farming practices in their fields. We then collect the data, analyze the results, prepare annual reports for each project. In 2025, we have 115 projects.



What is the favorite thing about your job so far?

My favorite part of my job is combining both economic and agronomic knowledge into project development, data analysis, discussions with growers at the end of the year. Understanding simple economic and agronomic thresholds is critical when talking about results with growers.

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

One thing I wish I knew as a student was to discuss ideas and topics with students and faculty from other focus areas in agronomy (fertilizer, cover crops, etc.) Oftentimes weed science topics can be combined with other topics into a multidisciplinary approach. Even though memorizing specific details about weeds and herbicides are important, I wish I spent more time learning about the holistic crop production cycle.

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

Weed science positions are a great start when looking for jobs, but there are so many agronomy jobs outside of this focus area. Be open to all agronomy positions in general, as it could lead to new ideas and new skills that could benefit a career path. Finally, learning GIS skills is highly important in a growing digital ag sector.

Upcoming Webinar for WSSA Student Members:

Title - More than an Author: Getting Involved in Peer-Reviewed Publishing

Topics covered – Dr. Sarah Ward will discuss all things related to the peer-review process. Join the discussion to learn tips on the peer-review process as well as how to become a reviewer yourself and do it well.

Speaker – Dr. Sarah Ward (Director of Publications, WSSA)

When – Thursday, October 30, 12:00 PM EDT

Registration Link - <https://forms.gle/7XdwUNDb7RicMNpM8> and register by October 27

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Scholarship Opportunity and Annual Meeting Dates

Scholarship Opportunity:

CAST Science Communication Scholarship

Amount: \$1,000

Who Can Apply? Undergraduate and graduate students who are CAST student members or enrolled at a CAST member university during the 2025 academic year.

CAST Membership – CAST offers free membership to students. Join CAST - <https://cast-science.org/membership/>

Scholarship Deadline: November 7, 2025

Scholarship Link - [Apply and learn more](#)

Upcoming Annual Meetings:

North Central Weed Science Society

December 15-18, 2025
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Northeastern Weed Science Society

January 5-8, 2026
Hershey, Pennsylvania

Southern Weed Science Society

January 26-29, 2026
Nashville, Tennessee

Weed Science Society of America

February 9-12, 2026
Raleigh, North Carolina

Western Weed Science Society

March 2-5, 2026
Tucson, Arizona

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