



2015 BHEARD Scholar
Prosanta Dash

Profile

Country of Study:	United States
University:	University of Florida
Department:	Horticultural Sciences
Student Position:	Graduate Research Assistant— Ph.D.
Hometown:	Khulna, Bangladesh
Home Institution:	Khulna University, Bangladesh
Home Position:	Assistant Professor
Mentored By:	USA: Dr. Carlene Chase, Associate Professor, Weed Sciences, University of Florida

Research Area: Horticulture

BHEARD PROGRAM START DATE: August 2015

UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION: B.Sc., Agriculture, Khulna University, Bangladesh

GRADUATE EDUCATION: M.Sc., Horticulture, Bangladesh Agricultural University, Bangladesh

RESEARCH INTERESTS: Prosanta is particularly interested in research related to horticultural science. Horticulture is the most dynamic and colorful sector of agriculture. Horticultural crops play a key role in alleviating nutritional deficiencies in the developing countries like Bangladesh.

More 2 billion people in developing countries, the vast majority of whom are women and children – suffer from nutrient deficiencies. This branch of agriculture can play a vital role in solving this global nutrient crisis and in turn increases incomes and job opportunities.

Moreover, horticulture plays a significant role to provide opportunities for diversification of income. This aesthetic branch of agriculture helps to improve economic and social conditions of the rural poor peoples, particularly women of my country.

The horticultural sector has acquired a bigger role in the economy of Bangladesh in generating self-employment and increasing income for the rural population. Acquired knowledge and practical skills through this program will help Prosanta to relate and integrate production of horticultural crops with other farm enterprises. This top level program facilitated to carry out simple, but meaningful scientific research on various facets of horticultural and other crop enterprises.

Although Florida is the leading producer of winter strawberries (*Fragaria xananassa* Duch.) in the United States, in recent years the Florida strawberry industry has faced increasing competition for the winter market from Mexico and California. Earlier planting in Florida has been suggested as a means of increasing profits in a challenging market.

However, earlier planting would expose transplants to higher soil and air temperatures, and heat tolerant cultivars are not currently available. The goal of the present research was to assess new methods on the mitigation of heat stress during early-season establishment of 'Florida Radiance' strawberry plug transplants.

On the other hand, strawberry is a new crop in Bangladesh. Many people do not know about this fruit and its nutritional value. Although, per capita fruit requirement is 115 g according to the World Health Organization, Bangladeshis receive only 80 g. Most of the fruits commonly grown in Bangladesh are not available during the cool season from November to April. This period of fruit scarcity provides farmers with the opportunity to increase fruit availability in the market.

Additionally, because strawberry production may allow the farmers of Bangladesh to earn good profits from small land area, their interest in the crop has been increasing. A farmer could easily earn Taka 1.5 to 2.0 lakh (\$1875 to \$2500) after producing strawberry on one 0.13 ha of land during the winter season. Due to the positive aspect of strawberry in Bangladesh, Prosanta will do research on strawberry after returning back to his country.

PERSONAL STATEMENT: To Prosanta, as a young prospective researcher, it is his dream to devote a part of his life to the development of horticultural science in his country. Bangladesh is still a developing country and the government has considered the goal of agricultural development through 2021 as a significant and urgent co-requisite for the country's food security, industrialization and modernization.

Therefore, if he successfully completes the Ph.D. degree through the Borlaug Higher Education for Agricultural Research and Development (BHEARD) Program and make practical use of what he has learned, he may be able to lead a group of researchers in the future. Through scientific achievement, Prosanta wants to demonstrate to the world that the Bangladeshi can do more than be good soldiers in war.

WHEN I AM NOT WORKING I ENJOY: Probably two of the main indicators that define Prosanta are his interest in all things biological and his hope. In his free time, Prosanta is actively involved in Gator Bengali Life, which reliefs him from daily monotonous life in abroad. His faith is very personal to him. Sometimes Prosanta goes to his friend's house to watch drama movies, gossip with friends, and play chess.