

Assistant or Associate Extension Professor of Soil
Science and Director
University of Connecticut

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Posted Sep. 16, 2024, set to expire Jan. 16, 2025

Job Title	Assistant or Associate Extension Professor of Soil Science and Director
Department	Department of Plant Science and Landscape Architecture
Institution	University of Connecticut Storrs, Connecticut
Date Posted	Sep. 16, 2024
Application Deadline	Open until filled
Position Start Date	Available immediately
Job Categories	Assistant Professor Associate Professor
Academic Field(s)	Agronomy/Plant & Soil Sciences
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Job Description	

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INTRODUCTION

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The Department of Plant Science and Landscape Architecture, a part of the College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources, at the University of Connecticut is pleased to invite applications for a full-time, 11-month, non-tenure, Assistant or Associate Extension Professor. This position will oversee operations in the existing UConn Soil Nutrient Analysis Laboratory. The anticipated division of duties for this role will be 70% Extension, 10% Administrative, 10% Teaching, and 10% Research. This position is anticipated to start December 1, 2024, with preference to applicants who apply by 8/31/2024. This position will be based in the Soil Nutrient Analysis Laboratory, located on the UConn Storrs Depot Campus in Storrs, CT.

We are seeking a dynamic and visionary leader with technical knowledge in soil science, who possesses the ability to facilitate the successful operation of the UConn Soil Nutrient Analysis Laboratory, a service center that processes more than 14,000 soil samples per year. Upon its completion, the incumbent will then serve as the Director of the UConn Plant and Soil Health Center, which will encompass the current existing centers/laboratories: the UConn Soil Nutrient Analysis Laboratory, the Home and Garden Education Center, the UConn Plant Diagnostic Laboratory, and the Turfgrass Diagnostic Laboratory. Expected completion of the UConn Plant and Soil Health Center (PSHC) is currently spring of 2025 and will be a one-stop comprehensive service center for plant health and soil testing, outreach, and education opportunities to Connecticut stakeholders. Additionally, the PSHC will also house flexible-use research laboratories to support research or grant-funded research associated with the broader CAHNR mission.

The successful candidate will be able to establish positive and productive working relationships with plant professionals, producers and growers, home gardeners, and soil professionals throughout the state and region; interact with UConn faculty, state, and federal agency personnel; sustain existing Extension programming and develop novel, accessible programming for Connecticut stakeholders. Additionally, the successful candidate will be someone who has a strong commitment to teaching excellence and is capable of teaching community participants of Extension programming, as well as one to two introductory undergraduate courses that contribute to the core curriculum per academic year (see below).

DEPARTMENT AND UNIT BACKGROUND

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The UConn Soil Nutrient Analysis Laboratory (SNAL; <https://soiltesting.cahn.uconn.edu/>) has been serving Connecticut farmers, greenhouse growers, plant and landscape professionals, and residents for over 80 years. The UConn SNAL provides an affordable means for agricultural producers and home gardeners to test their soil fertility and receive environmentally sound limestone and fertilizer recommendations. Through the lab's analyses and outreach efforts, stakeholders are informed about wise soil management and fertility practices. The UConn SNAL also analyses research samples for university faculty and graduate students and serves as a teaching laboratory for several Department of Plant Science and Landscape Architecture classes. The UConn SNAL processes about 14,000 soil samples annually. Samples are routinely tested for a variety of major and minor plant nutrients, lead, and pH. Limestone and fertilizer recommendations are based on university research and field studies. In addition to routine soil fertility testing, the SNAL also offers commercial agronomic and vegetable growers the Pre-sidedress Soil Nitrate Test (PSNT), End-of-Season Cornstalk Nitrate Test after harvest, and Saturated Media Extract (SME) to growers using soil-less potting media.

The Department of Plant Science and Landscape Architecture is one of nine academic units within the College of Agriculture, Health, and Natural Resources. Our department is comprised of 21 faculty members (15 tenure-track faculty and 6 non-tenure track faculty) and includes 12 staff professionals, who are devoted to excellence in research, teaching, and extension. The PSLA program proudly serves the needs of Connecticut through graduate and undergraduate education, outstanding public outreach programs associated with formal extension and engaged scholarship, and nationally competitive research programs. PSLA is typically the top academic department in CAHNR in external grant funding per faculty line. Over the last five years, grant expenditures have been about \$2 million per year. The plant science program is nationally known for a longstanding breeding program on ornamental plants with dozens of patents adopted by the industry, impactful outreach on integrated pest management in the green industry, progressive teaching, and research on hemp in controlled environment agriculture, applied research to solve problems in the green industry, and fundamental research in plant biology. The landscape architecture program is recognized for its public engagement with local communities to advance sustainable development and smart growth of towns and cities working on more than 50 projects in 30 cities over eight years, and training some of the best landscape architects in the region.

We offer programs leading to a B.S. in Sustainable Plant and Soil Systems, a Landscape Architecture Accreditation Board (LAAB) accredited B.S. in Landscape Architecture, and M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in Plant Science. Graduate students may specialize in horticulture, agronomy, soil science, and landscape architecture. The Plant Science program at Ratcliffe Hicks School of Agriculture offers an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree with a concentration in ornamental horticulture, turfgrass management, or sustainable crop production.

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The research and teaching infrastructure of the department includes wet laboratories, greenhouses, plant growth chambers and tissue culture facilities, design studios, 153-acre research and teaching farm, and the Waxman Conifer Collection. The department is home to the Home and Garden Education Center, the Plant Diagnostic Laboratory, the Turfgrass Disease Diagnostic Laboratory, the Soil Nutrient Analysis Laboratory, and the Plant Transformation Facility – each of which facilitates and supports extension and outreach to educators, homeowners, and commercial agriculture. PSLA is located on UConn's Main Storrs Campus, which is well-placed between New York, Boston, Providence, and Hartford. For further information, please visit our website (www.psla.uconn.edu).

As the oldest and one of the most academically diverse of UConn's colleges, the College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources is recognized for its strong research, teaching, and extension outreach programs, which engage communities and enhance the public good in Connecticut residents. The College's diverse range of disciplines fosters innovative collaborations that ensure a vibrant agricultural industry and sustainable food supply; enhance health and well-being locally, nationally, and globally; facilitate the design of sustainable landscapes across urban-rural interfaces; and advance resilience and adaptation in a changing climate.

The Department of Plant Science and Landscape Architecture is directly involved with the implementation of CAHNR's Strategic Vision to guide the development and focus of our teaching, research, and Extension programs in the years 2020-2025. The faculty person hired for this position will be expected to make significant contributions in their area of expertise, contributing to the advancement of one or more of the CAHNR's five strategic priorities.

- Ensuring a vibrant agricultural industry and sustainable food supply;
- Enhancing health and well-being locally, nationally and globally;
- Fostering sustainable landscapes across urban-rural interfaces;
- Advancing resilience and adaptation in a changing climate; and
- Dismantling structural racism and fostering environments that advance racial equity, inclusion, and belonging by advocating for anti-racist policies, practices, and norms.

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The CAHNR Strategic Vision (<https://cahnr.uconn.edu/visionandvalues>) provides additional information on the strategic initiatives and their related areas of emphasis. It is important to note that an essential component of the Strategic Vision is a commitment to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion through teaching, research, and extension and addressing structural racism by broadening participation and integrating culturally sustaining approaches in all College activities.

Founded in 1881, UConn is a Land Grant and Sea Grant institution and member of the Space Grant Consortium. It is the state's flagship institution of higher education and includes a main campus in Storrs, CT, four regional campuses throughout the state, and 13 Schools and Colleges, including a Law School in Hartford, and Medical and Dental Schools at the UConn Health campus in Farmington. The University has approximately 10,000 faculty and staff and 32,000 students, including nearly 24,000 undergraduates and over 8,000 graduate and professional students. UConn is a Carnegie Foundation R1 (highest research activity) institution, among the top 25 public universities in the nation.

Through research, teaching, service, and outreach, UConn embraces diversity and cultivates leadership, integrity, and engaged citizenship in its students, faculty, staff, and alumni. UConn promotes the health and well-being of citizens by enhancing the social, economic, cultural, and natural environments of the state and beyond. The University serves as a beacon of academic and research excellence as well as a center for innovation and social service to communities. UConn is a leader in many scholarly, research, and innovation areas. Today, the path forward includes exciting opportunities and notable challenges. Record numbers of undergraduate applications and support for student success have enabled the University to become extraordinarily selective.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The selected candidate will be someone who can engage stakeholders with an interest in soil health and collaborate regionally in developing educational programming and related resources that support sustainable production practices to reduce risk from mismanagement and climate-related stress on soils. Offering comprehensive soil analysis services through the existing service center is a core function of this role. Familiarity with analytical instruments including ICP-OES, discrete analyzer, CN analyzer, pH meter, EC meter, grinders, etc. is essential. The successful candidate will be able to run and train laboratory staff and students in the use of all laboratory equipment, troubleshoot equipment, and order consumables or service contracts when needed. The successful candidate will be able to prepare and oversee the preparation of chemical solutions needed in the laboratory and should be able to anticipate the life expectancy of analytical instruments to plan for timely replacement of equipment.

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Focus areas of teaching may include nutrient management and fertilization, soil chemistry, soil microbial ecology, integrated pest management, or other practices. Teaching needs include a one-credit writing class, SPSS 2110 Sustainable Plant Pest Management Communication, in addition to course(s) developed that align with the successful candidate's experience/research and support hands-on learning for our students. The successful candidate will be able to interpret soil test results and write management recommendations to address fertilization and soil amendments needed for the production of fruit, vegetables, bedding plants, woody perennials, lawns, and crops important to the New England region.

In their role as Director of the Plant and Soil Health Center, the successful candidate is someone who will establish positive and synergistic collaborations with the Associate Director of the UConn Plant and Soil Health Center to serve current stakeholders and broaden participation among members of under-represented groups; demonstrate through public engagement the commitment to, and support of, diversity in the learning experience; and provide leadership in developing techniques designed to meet the needs of diverse learning styles and intellectual interest. The successful applicant will demonstrate leadership skills for serving on state boards, councils, and committees where stakeholders and experts collaborate to address complex systems together.

Examples of participation, membership, and programming duties include:

- Participation in the USDA's federal working group – Northeast Coordinating Committee on Soil Testing (NECC-2312).
- Coordination of the CT Master Composter Program
- Soil Training for CT Master Gardener Program
- Participation in the soils section of the Natural Resources Conservation Academy with NRCS soil scientists.

Examples of participation, membership, and programming duties to be performed in collaboration with the PSHC Associate Director and PSHC team members include:

- Updating and maintaining the Plant and Soil Health Center website
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Contributing to, and ensuring the timely distribution of, the monthly PSHC newsletter

- Writing/reviewing fact sheets pertinent to stakeholder interest
- Coordinating Extension programming such as seminars, workshops, podcasts, and events
- Coordinating PSHC representation at various events including the CT Flower & Garden Show, FFA Career Development Events, The Big E, Connecticut Nursery and Landscapers Association Meetings, etc.
- Preparing annual reports of activities and surveys as well as employee evaluations

ROLE EXPECTATIONS

- Develop a strategic plan for the new Plant and Soil Health Center, including key performance indicators, and annual reports for the Center.
- Provide feedback and guidance directly to inquiries and respond to clients.
- Must be willing and able to work occasional evening and weekend hours.
- Must have reliable transportation and a valid driver's license.
- Must possess adequate physical stamina, agility, and fitness to perform the required duties.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

- Earned doctoral degree in soil science, soil chemistry, plant science, agricultural engineering, Doctor of Plant Medicine/Doctor of Plant Health degree, or closely related disciplines.
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For the Assistant Extension Professor title, at least three years of relevant experience is required.

- For the Associate Extension Professor title, at least five years of experience as an Assistant Extension Professor or the equivalent is required.?
- Three to five years of public, private, or academic experience operating or directing a soil, plant analysis, or environmental analysis laboratory.
- Proven communication skills, including writing and presentation skills as evidenced in the applicant's curriculum vitae.
- Understand, develop, and implement laboratory standard operating procedures, protocols, safety guidelines, chemical hygiene plans, and operational workflows and pipelines, such as analytical instruments.
- Computer literacy, including working knowledge of Microsoft Office Suite. MS Access is used as the SNAL laboratory information management system (LIMS), with support from Agstar programmers. Knowledge of alternate LIMS may be considered.
- Experience serving in supervisory and leadership positions, particularly within an academic or service center context.
- Experience with budgets, spending plans, and fiscal management for a laboratory, academic setting, or service center.

PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS

- Experience developing peer-reviewed scholarship, Extension reports, or articles in electronic media that communicate program impacts and results.
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Experience working with integrated Extension programs and the land-grant university system.

- Demonstrated ability to work cohesively with diverse audiences developing partnerships with other professionals and organizations to accomplish team goals.
- Experience in grantsmanship, particularly obtaining progressively larger grants and/or leading medium to large multi-disciplinary, multi-functional grant-funded projects.

APPOINTMENT TERMS

This is a full-time, 11-month, non-tenure track position that is available to start as soon as 12/1/2024. The position will remain open until filled, with preference given to applications received by 9/30/2024. The university provides a generous benefits package. For more information on benefits, please visit <http://www.hr.uconn.edu/benefits/index.html>. Starting salary and position rank for this position will be commensurate with training and experience.

This position is subject to annual renewal, contingent on satisfactory performance and budget funding. Other rights, terms, and conditions of employment are contained in the collective bargaining agreement between the University of Connecticut and the American Association of University Professors UConn Chapter (AAUP).

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

Employment of the successful candidate is contingent upon the successful completion of a pre-employment criminal background check.

TO APPLY

Please apply online to [Search #498484](#) and submit the following application materials:

- **Cover letter**?summarizing how your qualifications and experience meet the position requirements (maximum three pages).
- **Curriculum vitae.**
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A vision statement for the Plant and Soil Health Center describing your approach to leadership and how you propose to elevate the impact of the PSHC (maximum two pages).

- **Diversity Statement** describing the inclusive practices you would implement in relevant settings, such as the laboratory, in public-facing services, and in the classroom (maximum two pages).
- Names and contact information for **at least three references** including phone numbers and email addresses.

Review of applications will begin immediately and continue until a successful candidate is selected. Inquiries about the position should be directed to: Nick Goltz, nick.goltz@uconn.edu

At the University of Connecticut, our commitment to excellence is complemented by building a culturally diverse community of students, faculty, and staff.

This position will be filled subject to budgetary approval.

All employees are subject to adherence to the State Code of Ethics which may be found at?
<http://www.ct.gov/ethics/site/default.asp>

All members of the University of Connecticut are expected to exhibit appreciation of, and contribute to, an inclusive, respectful, and diverse environment for the University community.

The University of Connecticut aspires to create a community built on collaboration and belonging and has actively sought to create an inclusive culture within the workforce. The success of the University is dependent on the willingness of our diverse employee and student populations to share their rich perspectives and backgrounds in a respectful manner. This makes it essential for each member of our community to feel secure and welcomed and to thoroughly understand and believe that their ideas are respected by all. We strongly respect each individual employee's unique experiences and perspectives and encourage all members of the community to do the same. All applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, national origin, genetics, disability, age, or veteran status.

The University of Connecticut is an AA/EEO Employer.

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Contact Information

Please reference Academickeys in your cover letter when
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Contact

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