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The Battle Between Winter and Spring Weather

By: Theresa Lynn

Winter does not like to relinquish its rights to Spring. This quote by a new Russian friend perfectly describes the weather these days. Apparently Russians have witnessed the truth of this Russian proverb for many years. They consider March 1st as the beginning of Spring, but Winter says, "Not so fast!"

On many days the ground is wet with puddles of melted snow, but then about every third day the puddles turn to ice again. The wet grass is beginning to be visible just in time to be coated again by a layer of new snow. Some people are wearing lighter coats, but then the next day they have to bundle up heavily again.

Since March 1st the temperature has fluctuated back and forth from a sunny and warm forty-eight degrees Fahrenheit to a cloudy and cold fifteen degrees Fahrenheit with a wind chill that numbs the face. One thing is certain, there are many more sunny days now. The cold, overcast days are becoming far and few between. With April only a few days away, maybe *Winter* will finally relinquish its rights to *Spring*.

Farm Visits Offer Practical Applications Education

By: Nila Kreidich

Part of the exchange program here at MSAU involves visiting different agriculture related operations throughout the Moscow region. Presently we are taking a class taught by Dr. Buffington from Penn State called Environmental Impacts on Biological Systems. This class has complimented the past few field visits we have taken. Instead of simply sitting through a lecture in



Group at the Gardens

Easter and Eggs

Culture

By: Amanda Allbritton

The Russian Orthodox Easter lands on April 15 this year. Easter, known as *Paskha*, is the most important holiday in the Russian Orthodox Church. At midnight on Easter, the celebration begins with a parade where people march around the church twelve times with candles. Friends and family greet one another with the saying *Christ has risen*. They reply *Christ has truly risen* and give three kisses on the cheeks. Then the priest blesses the Easter baskets filled with eggs and they are shared.

As in America, eggs at Easter time are a tradition. Russians give eggs to each other to symbolize love and wishes for a good life. There are two types of eggs: *krashenki* and *pisanki*. *Krashenki* are elaborately decorated eggs of multiple colors. *Pisanki* are single colored eggs usually dyed red by boiling them in onionskins. They are eaten with

a classroom, we have been applying our knowledge to real situations. During these past two weeks we have often heard Dr. Buffington excitingly state, “This ties in perfectly with my next lecture.”

Dr. Buffington has been teaching us about how to adjust the environment around animals so that they produce to their full potential. We were given the opportunity to visit a swine facility that is part of a private farm that produces a variety of salted and cooked meat products. Students were able to see how they use heat lamps to maintain the appropriate temperature for piglets. On the same farm there was a small dairy operation. One observation made at this facility was the presence of high humidity along with strong odors. These are important warning signs to look for in a poorly ventilated system. Dr. Buffington is teaching us how we can use psychometrics to improve the surrounding conditions for animals by providing good ventilation as well as necessary heating or cooling. Without this knowledge, farmers run into condensation problems that can result in poor animal health along with building deterioration.

The following week we went to the Moscovski greenhouses where they produce an impressive 30,000 metric tons of vegetables per year under 114 hectares of glass. Presently, in Dr. Buffington’s class we are learning about how to control the four factors for plant germination: moisture, temperature, gaseous environment, and light. At the greenhouse they monitor these conditions using environmental control computers. We have also been learning about how to save on energy costs by properly insulating greenhouses. This facility uses a plastic bubble wrap material along the sides of all their greenhouses to prevent heat loss.

This has truly been a new kind of educational experience for all of us. We are quickly learning how to apply knowledge we learn in class to practical situations. We can understand time spent doing homework calculations will payoff ten fold in the future.

traditional Easter sweet bread, called *kulich* or *paskha*. The red color symbolizes Christ’s blood and beauty, while the yolk symbolizes the new life through Christ’s resurrection.

In 1883, Tzar Alexander III enlisted the expertise of jeweler Karl Faberge to make an egg to give his wife for Easter. His wife loved it. Alexander’s son, Nicholas II, continued this tradition of egg making with Faberge each Easter. These eggs portrayed events in Russian and royal family history. A total of 57 world-famous Faberge Eggs were created and are located in different museums and private collections around the world.

Over the years, egg decorating has been adopted by Russian culture as a craft. Wooden eggs are painted with icons, scenes from Russia, or fairytales. They sit on a holder for display and make perfect gifts and souvenirs.

Fields of Glass Activities

By: Matt Kreifels



Engineer At Greenhouse

How can someone define big or impressive? After visiting the second largest greenhouse in Russia, I realize that these terms are relative.

Wednesday, March 21st, we traveled to Moscovski Greenhouses, just south of Moscow. The purpose of these greenhouses is primarily vegetable production for the Moscow region. Here they



Dr. Buffington's Send Off

American Music

Focus

By: Noah A. Handley

One thing that eases the pain of homesickness is listening to American music on the radio or watching videos on Russian *МТV*. Flip to any radio station and you will hear a mix of boy bands, German techno, British rock, and Russian pop music. It is interesting that many Russians listen to American music even though they may have no idea what the lyrics mean. It is not uncommon to hear a song that sounds recognizable only to find that it is not an English artist, but a Russian Pop singer that has a sound similar to a song in the states. Many Russian singers look and sound like their American counter-parts. It is also a normal occurrence to be on the Metro and have a young person standing next to you with a headset blaring an American tune. It may not be the same as having a short conversation with a stranger, but it is definitely a comfort knowing that the young people here share our music interests.

During our stay in Moscow, two American Music artists, Eric Clapton and Marilyn Manson, have come to town. Being classic rock music fans, the group and myself looked into getting a ticket for Eric Clapton, but we waited too long. Graham and Amanda attended the Marilyn Manson concert and luckily made it back alive.

produce tomatoes, cucumbers, squash, peppers, lettuce, and other greens under 281 acres of glass. To give another indication of the scope of this operation, it takes 2,500 people to operate and manage this greenhouse. Most of the greenhouses are thirty years old, but appear like they were just built a few years ago. Sixty acres of the greenhouses are only fifteen years old and have an entire four-story building dedicated to using natural gas to create steam for heat—equivalent to the amount of heat needed to warm a town of 250,000 people through the winter.

An engineer for the facility showed us around the greenhouses explaining the inputs and outputs of the operation. We saw the latest technology in action, including a \$160,000 vacuum seeder that plants 40,000 seeds per hour. Even with having all this technology available, they still rely on bumblebees to pollinate the tomato plants because its cheaper, easier, and provides the best pollination. It was obvious that the management knew the best and most efficient way to produce their crops—either with the newest technology or via Mother Nature.

All of this work results in the production of 33,000 English tons of vegetables per year. The price they receive depends on the time of year because of competition with private farmers and Russian dachas (gardens) in the summer months. Never before have any of us witnessed a facility like this. It is safe to say that each of us are thoroughly impressed by the ingenuity, planning, management, and scope of these greenhouses.



Montana Men

American music definitely has its place in the current Russian culture. For the most part, it is our best way to remember home. I very much enjoy Russian pop music as well. It is nice to know that Americans and Russians have much in common, including tastes in music.



Matt Looking at CD's

Questions? Comments? [E-mail Us!](#)

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Group In Greenhouse

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