BITS program participants begin the first of three intensive consecutive courses with Tropical Horticultural Ecology. Cave Hill and McGill collaborate in teaching this course.

In 2015, the Tropical Horticulture course will be taught by Drs. D. Donnelly and V. Gravel (McGill), Drs. F. Lopez, S. Carrington, and Mr. Jeff Chandler (Mr. Horticulture) of the Biological and Chemical Sciences Department at UWI. McGill students take the city bus to their class at UWI from accommodations at the Bellairs Research Institute.

The BITS Class of 2014 visiting a mango orchard during a field trip.

Students during a field trip learning about grafting a lime branch onto the stem of a lemon tree.

Seeds, cuttings, layering, grafting, post- harvest handling, and environmental effects on crops are some of the many classroom topics covered, then out of the classroom to experience Barbados horticulture first-hand. Students visit the Bridgetown Port to learn how fruit and vegetables are imported onto the island and the Warrens Supercentre to see how they are sold locally. Under the excellent tutelage of Dr. Frances Chandler, a well-known local agronomist, they learn how
some vegetables and fruit, such as papaya, are grown at Redlands or Brighton. They learn how citrus and mango are propagated from Edmé Henry and tour the mango orchard at The Soil Conservation Unit. They visit the National Conservation Commission to see the new greenhouse and to learn about turf production from Mr. Sealy. Students have a close-up view of anthurium production from Mr. Trevor Hunte of C.O. Williams Flowers and learn how christophine is grown at Mr. Forde’s farm, at Sugar Hill, St. Joseph.

The beautiful Andromeda Gardens and Flower Forest host the students on several occasions, for exposure to a wide array of tropical fruit and ornamental species.

And it’s not over yet! On the agenda for the last week are The Ministry of Agriculture’s tissue culture lab at the Home Agricultural Station, St. Philips to experience high tech horticulture and Durant’s golf course to see examples of tropical turf. There are individual presentations by each student on assigned topics. What’s a Mammee apple, anyone? Students will have learned a tremendous amount about horticulture in Barbados and developed an amazing overview of locally-grown and imported produce.

Students learning about grafting and cutting during a fieldtrip to the NCC.

Laura Lasry and Priyanka Kapadia, get the best presentation awards (students’ choice) for their orals.

For the BITS students, two more intensive courses will follow Tropical Horticultural Ecology, including “Sustainable Land Use”, and “Tropical Energy and Food Technology”. In addition to course activities, students are working in groups of 2-3 with local mentors, on projects of national importance to Barbados.