Timothy Wilmot, Maple Extension Specialist, retired on November 30th, 2015, after 29 years of service at the University of Vermont Proctor Maple Research Center.

Tim, who always loved being a student, entered the College of Wooster (Ohio) in 1967 as a Chemistry major and received his bachelor’s degree in English six years later. In 1981 he returned to school, this time at the University of Vermont, and received a bachelor’s degree in botany in 1984 and master’s degree in botany from UVM in 1987. He joined the staff of the Proctor Maple Research Center as a research technician while finishing his master’s degree and worked with Dr. Mel Tyree on a variety of projects, including a study of maple nutrition and fertilization, and research on the mechanism of sap flow in maple trees. For the latter study, one of his first projects was to build a 35’ scaffold around a maple tree and take a variety of measurements from dawn to dusk during the growing season, after which the tree was cut into 10,000 pieces so that the area of all the leaves and every stem supporting them could be measured. In February 1988, all the data was lost when fire consumed the entire Proctor Center lab, and this made for a somewhat interesting time in his life as his first child had been born a few days earlier.

During the maple syrup lead crisis, Tim conducted several studies examining the sources and lead contribution rates of various types of maple sap collection and processing equipment on finished syrup lead levels, resulting in the formulation of guidelines for use of lead-containing equipment in maple sugaring operations.

For many years Tim operated his webpage “Treemet” on the Proctor Center website, which showed sap pressure and flow in real time in several large trees at the Proctor Center during the sugaring season. This helped provide a source of entertainment for maple producers waiting for the sap to run and promoted a better understanding among both sugarmakers and the general public about how weather conditions affected these parameters.

In 2004, Tim was appointed as a maple specialist with University of Vermont Extension. He played a key role in the restructuring and transition of the former Vermont County Maple Schools into the highly successful Vermont Maple Conferences. His research during this time focused upon increasing the understanding of sap flow mechanisms, the various environmental factors affecting flow, and applying this knowledge to improve sap yields from maple trees. He authored dozens of very interesting and popular articles, including an extensive series on maple research for Farming magazine, and began conducting an annual tapping survey to better understand the changes ongoing in the maple industry during this timeframe. He continued to participate in several ongoing studies by the scientists and staff of the UVM Proctor Maple Research Center involving emerging sap collecting equipment technologies and processes such as small spouts, vacuum, and tapping guidelines.

Most recently his research and outreach has focused on using 3/16” tubing to develop “natural” vacuum, a method Tim developed and championed. This approach has allowed many small producers to gain the benefits of vacuum production without the need for expensive equipment. Promising research is ongoing on using gravity vacuum as an adjunct to mechanically-produced vacuum in larger operations.

Tim has been a frequent speaker at conferences throughout the maple-producing region and has published widely in industry journals, numerous UVM published brochures, and scientific journals.

Although retiring from UVM, Tim will continue conducting work on sap collection with 3/16” tubing as well as other maple industry related questions as a researcher with Dominion & Grimm Co.