

March 25, 2003 Minutes

IPM Woody Ornamental Certification Workgroup

Location: Florida Nurserymen and Growers Association headquarters 1533 Park Center Dr. Orlando, FL Phone: (407) 295-7994 or toll free: 1(800) 375-FNGA

In Attendance: Norm Leppla, Rebecca McNair, Frank Melton, Daniel Sonke, Tom Green, Jim Warneke, Bill Schall, Lance Osborne, Mike Marshall, Heather Nedley, Wes Robbs, Timothee Sallin, Veronique Sallin, Nancy Prine and Frank Reed.

Introductions and opening remarks began at 10:00 AM. Norm Leppla reviewed project objectives. Heather Nedley, Communications and Marketing Director for FNGA, joined our group and read a portion of the minutes of the FNGA Woody Division Steering Committee meeting on February 21, 2003. With regard to the proposed Woody Ornamental certification process, the committee recommends FNGA take the following actions:

- FNGA should be at the table during these discussions
- BMPs should be incorporated or become a baseline requirement for the program
- The percentage/number of industry members on the program workgroup should be increased

The group suggested that new members of the workgroup should be selected rather than volunteer, to avoid skewed representation. Representatives from all regions of FL including the Panhandle should be included. The group expressed a desire to include innovative, motivated pioneers in the industry. It was also pointed out that shrub production is under-represented here, and shrub production differed from tree production. More consumers should also be invited, such as landscape architects, municipalities, and the Department of Transportation (suggested Howard Jeffries from Sanford). Heather offered to approach several members of FNGA and invite them to join the workgroup. She will discuss

which members to choose with Ben Boluski, FNGA President. Heather also suggested that we advertise in *Greenline*, FNGA's newsletter.

We discussed the materials already available, such as the Florida Green Industries BMP Manual, Best Management Practices for protection of Water Resources, which is narrow in scope (i.e. container grown) and therefore incomplete for our purposes. The Pest Control section should be augmented with IPM practices to fill in the gaps. Grades and Standards written by FL Department of Ag, Division of Plant Industry should also be incorporated, but not duplicated in our standards.

Feedback from consumers should be considered, as the woody ornamental industry is market driven. Landscape Architect, Nancy Prine described her expectations for plant materials: must meet grades and standards, healthy, vigorous growth, and safe. She asserted that a segment of the society would demand IPM-grown plants to protect the environment. Niche markets, such as schools, are already established. Jim Warneke, Pest Management Director at Disney, countered by pointing out more education is needed for the general public. He also stated that certification for annuals was most important to upholding the mission of Disney, as these plants are short term, whereas woody ornamentals could be sequestered for 6 months before installed.

A question was raised regarding the certification of individual plant types or the entire nursery. The group agreed that IPM is a philosophy, a process, and therefore the whole nursery must be certified.

Tom Green reiterated that quality, price, convenience and environmental stewardship resulted in sales for eco-labeled agricultural products. Post-sale care and home grown versus shipped in were also important considerations. Lance Osborne advised that individual plant species and varieties could be listed according to their degree of pest tolerance to help consumers make selections. Consumers could also receive a "booklet of instructions" containing IPM maintenance recommendations when they purchase plants. A brief history of the plants could also be provided, along with a means of identifying key pests and natural enemies.

The workgroup members launched into a brainstorming session on marketing strategies for IPM-grown plants. Mike Merchant explained that buyers decide what is grown via the marketplace. Jim Warneke informed the workgroup that Home Depot has opened wholesale nurseries. Timothee Sallin recommended that we identify niche markets for IPM-grown plants, e.g., chain stores, landscape architects, municipalities, and departments of

transportation. He said that 40% of Lowes' customers select plants on the Web before making a purchase. Lowes stores have installed interactive electronic devices in kiosks to inform customers about plants. Becca McNair added that Florida Yards & Neighborhoods has also experimented with kiosks in stores. Nancy Prine advised that the technical information about IPM-grown plants must be accurate and claims must be subject to audit. Veronique Sallin has found that the appearance of organic citrus must be equal to non-organic to be acceptable to consumers. Wes Robbs' experience has been that customers are beginning to instruct landscape maintenance technicians about acceptable pest management practices.

After lunch, Becca McNair, Florida Yards and Neighborhoods and IPM Florida Assistant presented- "FYN, Successful Environmental Education and Marketing to Consumers." Tom Green presented the group with an Inventory of IPM practices. We evaluated these practices and made necessary changes per the groups guidance and direction. We briefly discussed the point system criteria for reducing pesticide risk.

Timothee Sallin volunteered to assemble a list of trainings, meetings, and workshops that occur yearly and would satisfy our education requirements (i.e. CEUs). IPM Florida will continue to compile a list of IPM resources available in print and on the web. Heather Nedley will solicit members of FNGA as discussed previously. Tom Green will make changes to the IPM practices list per our group discussion. Our next meeting will be in Central Florida on May 13 or 14, to be announced. If you have any amendments or additions to these minutes please contact Becca McNair.

Special thanks are extended to the professional staff at FNGA for hosting our meeting and supplying refreshments.