
The Eastern Shore Floral and Nursery Crops Tour

Rainy weather didn't dampen the enthusiasm of the 44 participants of the 2003 IR-4/ EPA/ USDA Ornamentals Tour held June 19. In its fifth year of offering tours for EPA, this was the first Ornamentals Tour. Dubbed the Eastern Shore Floral & Nursery Crops Tour, this one began in Arlington, VA and ended at Harris Crab House in Grasonville, MD.

IR-4 Ornamentals Program Manager, J. Ray Frank stated, "We provided the Ornamentals Tour to give EPA reviewers a chance to see the variety of ornamental products and meet the growers. Ornamental crops are more diverse in both production and use." Tour organizers, Frank and IR-4 Study Directors, Van Starner, Michael Braverman, and Ken Samoil began the organization process earlier this year by interviewing growers and visiting their farms or facilities.

"The purpose of these tours is twofold; first, they provide first hand experience to the regulators by allowing them to get out to the fields and learn from the growers about their issues concerning crop pest management," stated EPA Minor Use Officer, Hoyt Jamerson. "Second, we generally have about two dozen EPA reviewers participate in the tours. Many of them may not get the chance to meet the people from IR-4 and learn about what they do. On the bus, they sit side by side with IR-4 research coordinators and study directors and are able to learn about the projects and the role IR-4 plays and its value to the industry. The face-to-face interaction with both members from IR-4 and the growers themselves provides an excellent opportunity for exchange." Hoyt continued, "Tours like this one help us to hear from the growers and its always good news to see that something we have just registered has provided a safe and effective outcome."

On Board Presentations

On the way to the first stop, the Wye Nursery in Hillsboro, MD, Geoff Galster, Director of Regulatory Affairs for the American Nursery and Landscaping Association (ANLA), and IR-4 Commodity Liaison Committee member, addressed tour participants. His presentation included an overview of the nursery industry. According to the ANLA, nursery and greenhouse crops account for 11% of all farm crop cash receipts and are the nation's sixth largest agricultural commodity and third largest farm crop, ranking ahead of such major plant crops as wheat, cotton and tobacco. Nursery and greenhouse crops rank among the top five commodities in 27 states while their share of overall agricultural crop receipts continues to increase. The second on board speaker was Emy Pfeil from USDA/ARS. Emy is currently involved with

the IR-4 foliar dislodgeable study. She brought aboard a plant for participants to use as they sampled a leaf punching device. Tour members were challenged to gather 40 good leaf punches from this plant. Leaf punches had to be whole and circular and could not contain veins. Participants quickly understood some of the challenges of samplers as they gathered less than 20 good leaf punches from the sunflower plant.

The First Stop

Wye Nurseries was the first stop on the tour, where participants witnessed the operations of the ball and burlap process. Owner, Karl Fischer compared this growing season to last year's drought and talked about the issues of over saturation of his crops. Karl, along with Mike Smithmyer, gave tour goers an up close look at one of their new directed spraying machines. It uses flaps to centralize and control the spray, while avoiding crop foliage.

Moving On

The next stop along the tour was at the John S. Ayton State Forest Tree Nursery. Richard Garrett instructed the tour on the purpose of the tree nursery and its products. The nursery offers 51 species for tree planting, 41 of them are hardwoods. The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program requires large numbers of different stream and buffer plants, therefore, many of the state nursery species sell out early and are not available until the next growing season. Richard talked about the minimum order process and provided a video for the bus ride that talked about the State's conservation program and its introduction into the Maryland school curriculum.

After a lunch break, the tour continued to the Chesapeake Nurseries in Green Hill, MD. During the ride, Jim McWilliams, from the Maryland Nursery and Landscape Association (MNLA) addressed the riders. He distributed copies of *A Statistical Profile of the Maryland Horticulture Industry*, and talked about some of the results. His own understanding of IR-4 was increased as he stated when addressing the group. He mistakenly thought IR-4 was a human resources organization but was pleased to know about IR-4's work with crop management. He was encouraged to find a new resource in IR-4 and will support IR-4's mission through the MNLA.

Older and newer technologies were demonstrated at the Chesapeake Nursery. At the Green Hill farm, Harrison Langleier showed the tour how they use a 50ft sprayer. He then drove

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them through his 600 acre farm where tour goers viewed the raised bed field production. A few miles away, son Greg Langelier invited the tour group into the Pemberton Road hoop houses. Greg talked about the greenhouse stability through all types of weather. He stated the greenhouses turn over twice a season and during this past winter, even though there was record snowfall, the greenhouse structures were able to withstand the heavy snow on the Cravo retractable roof with no apparent impact. The Pemberton Road propagation houses contain two acres of cuttings. The nursery also contains 150 acres of container production in hoop houses.

The sun began to shine during the final nursery visit of the tour. The Stadler greenhouses produce bedding plants under five acres of plastic and in container production. Owner Randy Stadler showed the group his backpack sprayer and discussed his spraying technique and limitations. He stated "bugs" were his greatest concern. He talked about how quickly his crops can be destroyed due to mites. Many on

the tour were impressed by the colors and variety of plants in each basket. Randy attributed this creativity of the variety of plants, plant colors and textures to his partner and wife, Bobbie. Randy and Bobbie sell their plants to small garden centers and farm stands, golf courses, and two upscale garden centers in Easton and St. Michael, MD.

The Final Stop

Who can visit Maryland without eating crabs? The final stop on the tour was Harris Crab House. Tour participants were able to eat to their heart's content and take out a few frustrations too as they hammered open the morning's catch. There were no empty stomachs on this tour.

IR-4 will continue this tour series in October with a tour of fruit and vegetable production and research in the panhandle of West Virginia, and a vineyard visit along the banks of the Potomac River in London County, VA. To learn more about IR-4 tours contact Van Starner at 732.932.9575 x 621 or visit our website at www.cook.rutgers.edu/~ir4.

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