



Arkansas Re-leaf newsletter

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Ornamental
Horticulture

Jim's Corner

When I started this newsletter four years ago, a colleague said, "Don't do it, you will not enjoy keeping up with a regular newsletter schedule." Just the opposite has happened for me. I have more "stuff" to share with you than I am allowed newsletter pages. This issue is no exception. I returned from the semi-annual turf field day at Fayetteville so excited about what my turf colleagues are doing (see Research Update) that I almost produced an additional issue this year just to highlight their efforts.

Summer is always a busy time of the year for me to travel out-of-state to meetings. In July, I attended a woody germplasm meeting in Boston that was in conjunction with the annual ANLA meeting. Several stops on the pre-meeting tours made the trip very worthwhile. I saw three great new ideas at Cavicchio's in Sudbury, MA (www.cavicchio.com). Cavicchio's does it all. They are a nursery, greenhouse and re-wholesaler. Their entire delivery fleet uses converted, used, beverage trucks (see photo below). The side loading makes it easy for loading and unloading. Shelving



braces are adjustable so you can accommodate crops of different heights. This would obviously not work well if you deliver crops staged on rolling carts.

The next "good idea" I viewed at Cavicchio's would mainly benefit larger growers. A big push these days is to find ways to save labor, and a big labor issue is the manual labor involved in moving individual containers. Cavicchio's designed a simple system of forks that they attach to the front of various tractors to load and unload large numbers of containers (see photos below). Manual labor is still required to space the containers. They went

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so far as to have equipment manufacturer Javo design a custom loader at the end of their potting line so carts/trailers are filled by a machine using the same forks.

I should tell you that later that evening at the ANLA reception a company previewed a prototype container spacing machine that was based on the Carnegie Mellon University Robotics Institute research (<http://www.rec.ri.cmu.edu/projects/container/>). The Carnegie Mellon research project, which cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, doesn't impress me one bit.

The tour group was also very impressed with the point-of-sale (POS) system that Cavicchio had developed and uses to check-out wholesale customers FAST. Each customer has a credit card with a bar code that is scanned as they enter the

wholesale yard. This starts a ticket for the customer indicating discounts, etc. As items are scanned in the field by a hand-held scanner, the information is transmitted by radio signal to the office computer. By the time the customer reaches the office, their ticket is printed and ready for their signature.

The Southern Nursery Association meeting in Atlanta the first weekend offered the usual benefits of an exceptional research conference followed by a great trade show. I always benefit from simply driving around Atlanta to get ideas and see what the "competition" is doing.

Later in August, I made my annual pilgrimage to Portland for the FarWest trade show. This year my focus was on finding sources for Japanese maples, dwarf conifers and liner suppliers. I saw an interesting concept

at one nursery. They were taking standard 'Emerald' arborvitae that were 3 to 4 feet tall and shearing away the foliage on the bottom two-thirds to produce a "ball on a stick" faster than you could by other means. This method worked well with 'Emerald' since it produces a single, central leader.

Although I did not attend, Janet Carson just raved about the Arkansas State Florists Association annual convention in Hot Springs on August 16-17. According to our statistics there are over 650 florists in Arkansas with an estimated gross sales of \$200 million!

The point of sharing these stories is to encourage folks to travel and get involved at meetings. These are great opportunities to learn and exchange with others in your respective industry.

Research Update

As I indicated in the introduction, I was very impressed with the research that my turf colleagues are conducting. If you missed the Turf Field Day on August 6, I will summarize some of the efforts by Drs. Doug Karcher, Mike Richardson and John Boyd.

Cultivar Trials

First, let's talk about the cultivar trials. The UofA Turf Farm boasts cultivar trials of tall fescue, bermudagrass and zoysiagrass selections. The UofA participates in the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP: <http://www.ntep.org>) for the above-mentioned grasses, and in 2004 will add bentgrass varieties. This national evaluation program offers landscapers, sod producers, lawn care companies, etc., a wealth of information. For example, you can find specific trial information on 46 tall fescue selections evaluated at Fayetteville at: http://www.ntep.org/data/tf01/tf01_03-1/tf01ar102t.txt.

I guess what impressed me most was how the turf industry is shifting towards seeded bermudagrass and zoysiagrass varieties. Of the 24 zoysiagrass varieties being evaluated, 8 are seeded, and with bermudagrass, 29 of the



Seeded Bermudagrass Establishment

42 varieties are seeded. While I do not feel vegetative production (e.g., sod, sprigs, plugs) of warm season grasses is on the way out, I do feel seeded varieties will offer us options down the road. The turf faculty are also working on an herbicide protocol when establishing the warm season grasses from seed.

The turf variety plots at Fayetteville are a great place for you to get a side-by-side comparison of turf varieties. In the case of zoysiagrass it was interesting to view

Dr. Richardson's comparison of coarse varieties such as Crowne and Palisades versus soft-textured varieties such as Zorro and Emerald. In the bermudagrass plots I think most everyone was impressed with the vibrant color of the Aussie Green selection.

Seeded Bermudagrass Establishment

Across the southern U.S., bermudagrass (*Cynodon* sp.) continues to be the major turfgrass species for golf courses, sports fields and lawns. An emerging trend is the use of seeded bermudagrass varieties for these applications. Early seeded cultivars such as 'Guymon,' 'Sonesta' and 'NuMex Sahara' did not produce quality in the quality range of established vegetative hybrids. Recent NTEP results suggest varieties such as 'Princess' (fine-textured like a hybrid), 'Riviera' and 'Yukon' are excellent for central and southern Arkansas while 'Riviera' and 'Yukon' are better suited for the colder northern counties. Although these new seeded cultivars should provide a quick, easy and economical way to establish high-quality bermudagrass turf, several major hurdles exist, including establishing weed control and the issue of cold hardiness, especially during the establishment year.

A fascinating trial (photo, page 2) is underway at Fayetteville to determine the optimum seeding date that ensures survival over the first winter. Plots were established in 2002 with seeding dates starting on May 10 and then at regular intervals through October 10. Just looking at the plots revealed a fascinating story. Establishment looked very good through seeding dates of August 1 which is nearly a

month later than what we normally recommend. Another surprising result was the observed germination in fall-planted plots the following spring even though no germination was observed in the fall.

The planting date study also offered another interesting finding. Although preliminary, it would appear that sports field managers in Arkansas might consider seeding bermudagrass in late winter or early spring rather than summer to rejuvenate damaged sports turf. If the data bears out, this would allow sports turf managers an opportunity to spread activities to a less active time of the year.

Bermudagrass Renovation

Everyone knows what a challenge it is to kill existing bermudagrass turf if you want to establish another turf species or develop landscape beds. Dr. Boyd summarized research he is conducting on bermudagrass renovation and the results are quite clear. To be most effective in killing established bermudagrass you must use at least three applications of glyphosate. The herbicide applications need to be made when regrowth occurs.

Zoysiagrass Hydroseeding

A study is underway at Quail Valley Grasses that is comparing traditional sprigging techniques to hydro-mulching El Toro zoysiagrass sprigs or hydro-sprigging. Results from this innovative research should be available next year.

Fact Sheet

Following after our Cooperative Extension Service fact sheets for the Greenhouse Industry (http://www.uaex.edu/Other_Areas/publications/HTML/FSA-6100.asp) and the Nursery Industry (http://www.uaex.edu/Other_Areas/publications/HTML/FSA-6096.asp), we have developed a fact sheet for the Landscape Industry on "Sources and References for the Landscape Industry – 2003," FSA6109, (http://www.uaex.edu/Other_Areas/publications/HTML/FSA-6109.asp).

What's Up?

- What is the common theme that all of you share in the Green Industry? You are in business! I just received the Arkansas Small Business Development Center (ASBDC: <http://asbdc.uarl.edu>) newsletter for September through December. Listen to some of these great classes: "Designing Your Own Web Page," "Understanding Financial Statements," "Managing Cash Flow" and "The Use of Census Information in Small Business."
- On August 27 a group of university, extension and regulatory folks met in Clarksville to discuss the emerging Japanese Beetle issue. The meeting was very productive. We plan to get appropriate speakers at the ATA and AGIA meetings in January and work on more educational efforts. The Cooperative Extension Service has produced an excellent fact sheet on the topic (http://www.uaex.edu/Other_Areas/publications/HTML/FSA-7062.asp). Now that the Japanese beetle is here, turf and ornamental businesses need to start planning how it will affect them.



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Upcoming Events

October 3-4 – Middle Tennessee Nursery Association (MTNA) Horticultural Trade Show. McMinnville Civic Center, McMinnville, TN. Contact: Ann Halcomb, MTNA Exec. Sec., 931.668.7322; e-mail mtna@blomand.net; url <http://www.mtna.com> or <http://www.southeasternnursery.com/mtna>

October 5-8 – IPPS Southern Region NA. San Antonio, TX. Contact: Dr. David L. Morgan, 817.577.9272; e-mail dleemorgan@msn.com or url <http://www.ipps.org/Default.asp>

October 10 – ISA Certification Exam in Little Rock. Contact ISA at 217.355.9411 or url <http://www.isa-arbor.com>

October 14 – Tree Care Workshop. Okl. Bot. Garden., Stillwater. Keynote speaker: Dr. Gary Watson. Contact Mike Schnelle at 405-744-7361

October 30-November 3 – American Society of Landscape Architects. Ernest N. Morial Conv. Ctr., New Orleans, Louisiana. Contact: ASLA. 202.898.2444; url <http://www.asla.org>

Nov. 5-9 – ALCA Green Industry Conf. and Expo. St. Louis, MO. Contact: <http://www.alca.org>


2004

January 4-6 – Western 2004: The Big Show. Hyatt Regency Crown Center, Kansas City, MO. Contact: Western Nursery & Landscape

Association; Mary Piatt; 816.233.1481; e-mail info@wnla.org; url <http://www.wnla.org/insidethewestern.htm>

January 6-7 – Arkansas Turfgrass Association (ATA). Hot Springs Conv. Cntr. Contact ATA at 501.224.4840 or <http://www.arkansasturf.org>

January 23-24 – Arkansas Green Industry Association (AGIA). Hot Springs Conv. Cntr. Contact AGIA at 501.225.0029 or <http://www.argia.org>


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