



Arkansas Re-leaf newsletter

For the Commercial Green Industry

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Jim's Corner



Is this the future of landscape equipment?

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I was remiss last issue to not mention my hiccup moment at the Texas Nursery Landscape Expo. Somehow I was not following my landscape magazines as close as I should have been. At this show were multiple vendors featuring turf equipment powered by propane or companies that would convert your existing equipment to propane. There was even a company (EnviroGard: <http://www.onyxolutions.com/authorized-conversion-center-program.php>) that provided conversion kits for some mowers. The Propane Research & Education Council has an entire section devoted to mowers: <http://www.propanecouncil.org/Mowers.aspx?id=3334>.

As promised in the last issue, our web associate, Donna Rinke, placed photographs on the web from my bedding plant trial trips in 2009: http://www.aragriculture.org/horticulture/trial_summary/crystal_springs.htm.

I always look forward to this year-end issue so I can acknowledge those who really make my program, and year,

successful. First, I am sure that many of you are not aware that my friend and colleague, Dr. John Boyd, retired on November 1. John has been a great supporter of my program over these past 11 years. The University of Arkansas was very lucky to have John's weed control expertise. John contributed greatly to the turf and ornamental programs in the state and region.

In January 2009 I started working with a new Master's graduate student at Fayetteville. I am very fortunate to be working with Celina Gomez. Celina is working on evaluating the potential for using parboiled rice hulls (PBH) as a container substrate for nursery growers. In October she won first prize in a student competition at the International Plant Producers Society (IPPS) for her side project, which looked at PBH as a rooting substrate for woody cuttings.

I also want to thank Stan Brown (Blossomberry Nursery, Clarksville) for riding shotgun on several of my many wild 'field trips' this year, to Donna and Tracey

Bemis (Bemis Nursery, Little Rock) for continuing to let us use field space for our statewide Plant Evaluation Program (PEP) and to Paul Ballantyne and Qingfang Chen for their technical support on the PEP. I also want to thank staff in our Communications Department who helped with this newsletter and many other projects.

Plant Evaluation Program: left, good dwarf crapemyrtle (Cherry Dazzle™); right, not so good (Raspberry Dazzle™)



What's Up

General

Whether you are a landscaper or a retailer, you may have been asked to quantify the **value of trees** in a landscape. To take that one step further, some researchers at UC Davis have developed a Tree Carbon Calculator (<http://www.fs.fed.us/ccrc/topics/urban-forests/>). You enter your tree, its age and location, and it will estimate how much carbon is sequestered by that tree.



Adapted from “3 Ways to Convert Web Visits to Sales”

By Timothy Lee, Associate Extension Specialist, UALR Lead Center

The *Wall Street Journal* recently published an article by Raymund Flandez on three ways to increase sales conversions on a Web site. Flandez recommended:

1. **Click 2 Phone.** Technology now exists to add a button to your site for visitors to click and initiate a telephone call to your business. Customers need only click an icon and enter their cell, home or business phone and the Click 2 Phone software will dial your business and ring the customer's telephone. A spa in New York reports a 5-10 percent conversion

ratio (2 percent is the Internet norm) for about a \$250 per year cost.

If this sounds like something you'd like to try, then visit *Jajah.com* and explore Jajah Buttons. You might also visit *BoldCall.com* and *Callverse.com*.

2. **Chat.** A home improvement business added Internet chat to its site, resulting in 300 new daily customer interactions. About 9 percent of chats were converted to sales. For as little as \$29 per month, businesses can start with BoldChat Basic at <http://BoldChat.com>.

Web site owners should read the complete article at WSJ.com: <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB125207251462486505.html>.

Source: Arkansas SBTDC E-News - Biz Bytes, Sept. 16, 2009



2009 Web Design Trends

By Timothy Lee, Associate Extension Specialist, UALR Lead Center

Just as fashion has trends and certain styles, colors and features that are “in,” so does Web design. Web

design trends in 2009 are now apparent, and most are easy to adapt.

- **Big**
Big text is in. Designers are using big fonts in big, bold colors to make big impressions. Big logos and big images are also popular.
 - **Content Sliders**
Content sliders, or carousels, are hot. Written in JavaScript, these widgets rotate photos and text up and down or side-to-side. Here's a link to the popular jFlow slider: <http://tinyurl.com/jflow-slider>.
 - **Media Blocks**
Similar to sliders, media blocks containing video or audio indicate your site is “with it.” Sites like **YouTube** make it easy to upload video files and then provide HTML snippets to add sharp media blocks to your site. Users like sitting back and having your product or service explained to them step-by-step. Remember to keep your media short and to the point.
- Source:** Arkansas SBTDC E-News - Biz Bytes, Sept. 30, 2009



Social Security Ending Telephone SSN Verifications

By Timothy Lee, Associate Extension Specialist, UALR Lead Center

Social Security will no longer accept manual telephone Social Security Number (SSN) verifications after Oct. 31, 2009. Employers must use Telephone National 800 # Employer Verification (TNEV) or Social Security Number Verification Service (SSNVS) to verify SSNs. Employees who verify SSNs for their employers must be registered SSNVS users in order to access TNEV and/or SSNVS. TNEV is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

If you are not a registered SSNVS user, don't delay. Register today for SSNVS: <https://secure.ssa.gov/acu/IRESSWeb/registration.jsp>.

Source: Arkansas SBTDC E-News - Biz Bytes, Oct. 29, 2009

Retail

Cypress Mulch Study

From Charles Clement and Richard Vlosky, Renewable Natural Resources

The use of Louisiana cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) in the tree-based mulch industry (bark, pine straw or wood chips) has been the subject of heated debate for several years. In the fall of 2007, three major home-center retailers (Lowe's, The Home Depot and Walmart) chose to no longer sell cypress mulch that came from Louisiana, citing environmental concerns related to the deterioration of coastal wetlands. This has become a topic of controversy, with parties for and against the cypress mulch industry making strong arguments supporting their respective claims. In 2008, the Louisiana Forest Products Development Center conducted a national survey of top home-center retailers, nurseries and landscape contractors to better understand need/use/demand for different types of tree-based mulch and cypress mulch in particular. We were

interested in attitudes and perceptions regarding cypress mulch because of recent issues surrounding the supply and consumption of mulch originating in Louisiana. A questionnaire was mailed to the top 500 home-center retailers, 250 wholesale nurseries and 250 landscape firms in the U.S., requesting information based on their sales in 2007. After taking into account undeliverable surveys, the adjusted response rates were 17 percent (home centers), 32 percent (nurseries) and 22 percent (landscapers).

Results indicate that:

- Ø Few home center respondents sell tree-based mulch – including cypress mulch nor do they have plans to do so in the future.
- Ø Landscape contractors and nursery respondents are the main supply chain participants for mulch from the groups included in the study.
- Ø Landscape contractors were most concerned (60 percent) about where the cypress mulch they sell originates. Nearly half of nursery respondents had similar concerns.
- Ø Respondents' future cypress mulch sales will continue to be a part of their product mix.

It appears that the future is optimistic for mulch use in general and cypress mulch in particular because of continued respondents' plans to carry these products. However, although there are benefits to consumers in using cypress mulch – such as durability, insect resistance and aesthetics – environmental issues and concerns have already altered the landscape. We suggest that continued sales of cypress mulch in the future, at least for 53 percent of all respondents, is contingent on trust that the mulch comes from sustainably managed forests and/or from manufacturing residuals and not from whole trees.

Source: LSU AgCenter Ornamental Horticulture E-mail Update, August 31, 2009

Landscape

I received an e-mail about this mapping/estimating software: <http://www.goilawn.com/>.



So you know we are still working on the mysterious decline of ornamental pears in the region, Dr. Alan Windham of the University of Tennessee has added one more to our list of potential candidates, in this case, a fungus associated with black root rot of pear (*Xylaria polymorpha*).

Greenhouse/Nursery Growers

Syngenta has two very nice **production guides** for bedding plant growers (<http://www.syngentaebiz.com/dotnetebiz/imagelibrary/91000436B.pdf>) and nursery growers (http://www.syngentaebiz.com/dotnetebiz/imagelibrary/WoodyOrn_Printer_LowRez.pdf) that you can view or download for free. The only limitation is that the pest guides only reference their products.



Michigan State University released a CD-based set of customizable, reusable spreadsheets and a DVD tutorial that nursery managers can use to determine their **costs for producing plants**. Read more at <http://www.plantmanagementnetwork.org/pub/cm/news/2009/NurseryTool/>.



New Fact Sheets
(read/download at www.uaex.edu):

- **Nematode Management in Lawns** (FSA6141)
- **Busting the Most Common Lawn Myths and Misconceptions** (FSA6142)
- **Building a Backyard Putting Green** (FSA6143)
- **Cercospora Leaf Spot on Hydrangea** (FSA7570)
- **Black Root Rot on Greenhouse Ornamentals** (FSA7571)



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Upcoming Events

January 3-4, 2010: The Western Trade Show, Overland Park, KS. Contact: <http://www.wnla.org/>

January 20-21: Arkansas Green Ind. Assoc. (AGIA)/Ark. Turfgrass Assoc. (ATA) Conference & Trade Show. Hot Springs, AR. Contact: <http://www.argia.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=3> or <http://www.arkansasturf.org/>

January 21-23: Gulf States Horticultural Expo, Arthur Outlaw Convention Center, Mobile, AL.
Contact: <http://www.gshe.org/Trade-Show/>

February 10-12: Southern Nursery Assoc. Trade Show and Research Conference, Cobb Galleria, Atlanta, GA. Contact: www.sna.org

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