

Nursery Notes:

No matter how many people I talk to or presentations I sit through, I always learn something new. On June 17th and 18th, a workshop was held at Commercial Nursery in Franklin County on IPM practices and best management practices for nursery production.

The overwhelming piece of information I heard and took home was that there are no secrets or no magic bullets for nursery production. Nursery production is like a puzzle, there are many choices (pieces) to choose from at any given moment. Some of those pieces, fit into the problem better than others. Rather than just blindly grabbing at puzzle pieces and seeing if they fit, take a step back and look at the puzzle piece and note its characteristics and quirks. Then go hunting for the missing piece.

On day one, the workshop was focused on learning how to use the *IPMPro* App for your smartphone. This app allows you to see what pests and diseases are active and the course of treatment to take. The app also allows for pesticide recordkeeping which can be extremely useful for applying and documenting chemical applications while out in the field, without having to go back to the office.

After a short break we set off outside to capture the water distribution pattern from one of the sprinklers in the container yard to determine uniformity. If any overly dry spots or wet spots were found, the sprinkler emitter should be checked. An hour after irrigating, some of the containerized dogwoods were checked for salts (fertilizer) by collecting the leachate and pouring it into a Myron-L meter. Dogwoods are one of the few nursery crops that actually respond better to lower fertilizer rates. A good EC (Electrical Conductivity) to shoot for during the growing season is around 0.5millimhos/cm. If the EC gets too high, the sensitive roots can be damaged.

During the afternoon sessions, insects were discussed. Some of the noteworthy insects that threaten the nursery industry in Tennessee are the already known ambrosia beetles, scales and buprestid boring insects. However, some new insects to be on the lookout for are Asian longhorn beetles, crapemyrtle bark scale, and oriental beetles.

On day two, we began with an in depth discussion of plant diseases. Boxwood blight was perhaps the disease of most concern but fortunately it has not made it to Tennessee. Unlike Volutella blight on Boxwood where leaves remain attached to the plant, Boxwood blight will cause rapid defoliation. When bringing any new plants in from out of state, especially boxwood, its best to quarantine them for at least 2 weeks.

The workshop concluded with a top notch weed control lesson. Identifying your problem weeds and their lifecycles is the first place to start. Then when the weed is expected to germinate and become a problem, apply a pre-emergent herbicide prior to it germinating. Crabgrass for example, is expected to germinate with the onset of the first warm weather, thus, the best time to apply a pre-emergent is in mid to early spring, several weeks to a month prior to warm weather. Pre-emergent herbicides are one of the greatest time-saving practices a grower can employ but, like I recently learned, even when applied correctly, they do not completely eliminate hand weeding; they just make it much easier.

-Adam Blalock