

Horticulture Working Group Notes

Notes by Christy Brigham

Facilitators: Mark Newhouser and Kate Symonds

Terri Kempton and Mark Newhouser provided an introduction to the project of removing invasive species from nurseries highlighting:

- Work with the horticulture industry to reduce use of invasive plants in horticulture
- Goal of removing invasive plants from sale
- Goal of addressing a certain number of plants (not all species)
- Using Cal-IPC criteria for selecting plants to focus on
- 22 people are on the steering committee for the project including representatives from:
 - landscape architects
 - Home Depot
 - Growers
 - John Randall (TNC)
 - Sarah Reichart (University of Washington)
- Goal of transparent collaborative process
- Communicate results of project back to constituencies for consensus
- Achieve change from within the industry

Terri Kempton also mentioned that:

- Sustainable Conservation has a quarterly newsletter
- The plant list of focus species has been identified
- A toolkit and outreach materials are being developed for each species focusing on separate information for producers and consumers
- They hope to have the toolkits completed within a year
- They are currently working with Sunset magazine on an article
- In 2007 they will be working on predictive measures to use on potential new landscape plants to predict invasive potential
- The door opened to working with the nursery industry at the last symposium where Monrovia was represented

Mark Newhouser also gave a brief tour of the Cal-IPC webpage and the Don't Plant a Pest brochures.

Kate Symonds (facilitator) asked how many people in attendance had experience working with the nursery industry on the invasive species issue.

Nine people indicated past work with nursery industry. People described the following experiences:

Sue Fritske (Golden Gate National Recreation Area) commented on seeing over 20 nurseries in Marin county selling invasive plants near the GGNRA. She had the following suggestions:

- Get listings of local nurseries
- Assign people to work with local nurseries in each area
- Avoid duplication of contact
- Discuss having displays at nurseries
 - Provide brochures at nurseries with alternatives available for purchase on the spot
 - Help nurseries avoid being hit with an economic loss by promoting alternatives
 - Avoid the need for the consumer to search for alternatives

Kate Symonds added that we should help nurseries with a seamless transition away from invasives with no economic loss.

Sustainable Conservation is discussing nursery displays and approaches.

Sustainable Conservation is discussing certification for landscapers with invasive species training.

Mark Newhouser passed around a regional contact list for the Don't Plant a Pest brochures.

Linda Hillman described her personal interactions with nurseries (at Home Depot and elsewhere). There is a local nursery in Berkeley that sells a lot of native plants but also sells iceplant. When Linda questioned them about the iceplant they made excuses and justified their actions. Linda suggested that CNPS might be a good contact group for nurseries.

Terri Kempton mentioned designing promotional information for nurseries about the program and also for nurseries to provide to consumers. In addition, she mentioned developing the idea of sending pledge letters to nurseries – if they get rid of invasives and carry alternatives instead; we pledge to purchase the alternatives from that specific nursery.

Mark Newhouser mentioned that we would make information about this project and Sustainable Conservation available on the Cal-IPC webpage.

Mark Newhouser commented that resale outlets must demand the invasive alternatives from the wholesalers.

We should approach Horticulture and Landscape architecture departments in all colleges as a form of outreach.

Sam commented that there are lots of old school Horticulture teachers out there. It is vital to get invasive species issues into the curriculum.

Susan Mason mentioned addressing the issue of demand for these plants by contacting newspapers and garden editors and having them write articles addressing the garden escape issue.

Sam also commented that the brochure is an extra thing to pick up, what about incorporating issues of invasive plants into the Western Garden Book?

There was a brief discussion on what is currently in the Western Garden Book – currently a small disclaimer about some species but no symbol for invasive.

Jennifer Burt mentioned that UC Davis IGERT have made contact with the editors of the Western Garden Book and are looking into this issue.

Elaine Jackson is concerned about potential economic impacts to nurseries. One way to offset economic impacts would be to link alternatives to fire safe landscaping and market the list to nurseries and consumers living near open spaces prone to fire.

Several lists could be developed- an allergy-free list, a fire safe list, a drought tolerant list. Right now the Fire Safe Council's list of fire safe plants is full of invasive plants.

Mark Newhouser mentioned that it is important to get comments in early during the development of these plant lists so that they can be removed prior to printing. The Marin-Sonoma WMA lobbied for changes when their local fire safe list was being revised.

Daniel Songster mentioned that it is great to have nurseries at the table. He mentioned previous CNPS efforts with Jake Sigg to approach nurseries. Local people working with local nurseries had great success when the people involved had good outreach skills.

Daniel Songster – CNPS has an up and running Horticulture committee. Peggy Duvall is the contact. Daniel is on the committee. We need to strengthen the tie between CNPS and Cal-IPC.

Kate Symonds mentioned the need to make contact with Master Gardeners.

Bertha McKinley described approaching big chain stores and being bucked up the chain of command. The sales staff is often on board with not selling invasives but doesn't have any ability to do anything.

Sue Fritske mentioned the need to approach not just growers but also seed companies. GGNRA was selling "native California wildflowers" in their visitor center that was full of non-natives and genetically inappropriate plants.

Terri Kempton mentioned that staff training is a big concern for nurseries.

Terri Kempton – Home Depot has a single buyer who purchases plants for all the Home Depots in the western half of the country. This buyer is very receptive to invasive plant concerns.

Jennifer Burt mentioned that plant purchasing can be at the level of the individual at small nurseries and grassroots efforts at education have their place.

Stephen Jones inspected plant materials coming in for the county Agricultural Commissioners office. He sees the impacts of invasive species on roadsides and flood control channels. He is also working on mitigation projects and sees consultants recommending inappropriate plants.

Stephen Jones mentioned contacting the California Association of Nurserymen, C.L.C.A. (Landscapers), PAPA (a pesticide training group), and designers of large building projects (condos, etc.). He also mentioned the up and coming problem of water gardens.

Mark Newhouser asked Stephen about regulating shipments.

Stephen said regulation was easy – they could destroy or return it to the place of origin – but only for listed noxious pests.

Jennifer Burt and Adrianna Muir, along with other UC Davis graduate students, did a project surveying nursery professionals in the Bay Area about their awareness of invasive species and the St. Louis Voluntary Codes of Conduct. They interviewed retailers, wholesalers, and growers in the Bay Area and asked to speak with people who had purchasing power (purchasing agent, manager, owner, etc). They asked about awareness and implementation of preventative measures regarding invasive species. They found that very few nursery-people were aware of the St. Louis codes. They have a poster at the Cal-IPC conference.

- 100% of people contacted had heard something about the invasive species issue.
- 81% were aware of the role that the nursery industry plays in introducing invasive plants.
- 28% had engaged in the majority of preventative measures that are listed in the St. Louis codes.
- The 28% taking action were more likely to be involved with some sort of nursery trade association and want to project a green business image.
- All respondents cited ‘lack of information’ as the greatest obstacle to engaging in The Codes. They need detailed information on the day to day implementation of preventative measures. Other discouraging factors cited by ‘inactive nurseries’ were lack of funds and lack of personnel.
- Many people (41% of respondents) were willing to engage in The Codes.
- There is a great potential for increasing involvement.
- 31% said they have not and would not engage in preventative measures.
- There was no correlation between cooperation and large versus small nursery.

Kate Symonds mentioned that this study could be used to structure efforts for a nursery outreach program.

Jennifer and Adrianna said they will pass on their information to Sustainable Conservation and Cal-IPC.

The project was a side project. They hope to pass on the results and publish a journal article on the project.

Jennifer and Adrianna also asked the nursery-people what reference they used and do they make their own plant labels. Sunset Western Garden Book was the most commonly used reference.

Jennifer is interested in doing an internship with Sunset. They invited the garden editor to UC Davis through the UCD News Service. The editor is very interested in their project. In the past, other people have contacted Sunset and gotten nowhere. Jennifer is waiting to hear back from them. She thinks that we should use the existing pathways of information such as Sunset.

Bobbi Simpson has seen the survey results and sent them on to Cal-IPC.

There was then a short discussion of Jennifer and Adrianna's actual dissertation research and the IGERT program at UCD. 4 other students did a study on the aquarium trade where they inventoried stores and looked at the biological requirements of the fish being sold with an eye to identifying potential invasive species.

Kelly Rose from Ballona Wetlands in L.A. has contact with many thousands of people every year. She wants to know what she can do in her contacts to educate and inspire people about this issue. We need local activism and local ordinance. Maybe we could repeat the Bay Area study in Southern California.

Drew Ready mentioned the L.A. W.M.A. project to create a wallet-sized version of the DPP brochure modeled after the Monterey Bay seafood card.

Kate Symonds asked about constructive measures being implemented in specific areas.

Mario Abreu, who works at the Mendocino Botanic Gardens, talked about the history at the garden of planting of non-native flora. Then visitors come and see these non-native plants and want to grow them at home. They assume that all plants that they see at the garden are approved/sanctioned by the garden as being good plants.

Mario Abreu brought the the St. Louis Codes to the garden for discussion. The garden has a retail nursery. They need a committee to review the invasive species list and compare it to what they are selling in their nursery. They need site specific invasion risks for their area. They also need guidance for future plantings in the garden and interpretation for visitors.

Mario also mentioned that there has been a great deal of resistance to these ideas at the garden. The resistance may be due to aesthetic concerns. Mario is responsible for the natural areas at the garden.

Mark Newhouser mentioned the Chicago garden and St. Louis Missouri Botanic Garden have protocols.

Mario Abreu mentioned that the Mendocino Botanic Gardens retail nursery is not funded by anyone and needs to make money. In prior years, many invasive plants have been sold including Jubata grass and brooms. Many species still not on the Cal-IPC list are invasive in the Mendocino area.

- Should they not sell plants that are not on the list but are invasive in their area?
- They need to talk about invasive qualities not just rely on the list.
- Focus on educating the public using gardening knowledge – does the plant reproduce quickly and migrate out of the planted area in your yard? Do you have to do a lot of weeding to prevent it spreading?
- Focus on reproduction and local spread qualities.
- If the retail nursery isn't aren't willing to remove species, perhaps the nursery could develop a disclaimer.
- Mario also asked about outreaching to bookstores.

Drew Ready mentioned that the L.A. and San Gabriel watershed council has focused on landscaping issues and are starting outreach efforts to nurseries. They are looking forward to partnering with Cal-IPC, they are getting regional reports together. They want the St. Louis codes to be promulgated. They are worried about the nursery industry being self-regulating since growers supposedly at the table are marketing and promoting plants that “naturalize well” and “invade wild places”. See Monrovia’s website entry for [Cytisus x spachianus](#).

Martha Berthelsen described a Bay Friendly gardening outreach to nurseries. They started with a group of 4 nurseries and asked them to post a list of Bay Area friendly plants. The plants were non-invasive and water conserving. They combined multiple messages into one list so people don't have to juggle lists.

- Nurseries are interested in doing what is right.
- They need incentives
- For bay friendly list the incentive is paid ads that promote bay friendly plants and list the four nurseries as places that they can be purchased.
- They are also doing nursery staff trainings.
- The staff like it but cites lack of contact time with customers as a constraint.
- They hold free workshops for the public and mention the 4 nurseries by name.

Martha Berthelsen suggested that we could mention to nurseries that their names would be mentioned to the Cal-IPC membership if they remove invasives and offer alternatives. More info. about this program can be found at Bayfriendly.org

Educating volunteers who do weed work is also an outreach tool. These volunteers are consumers and see invasive plants being sold. We need to get information out to volunteers.

Kate Symonds mentioned that NRCS as an agency has spread weeds but now has a new group, Resource Conservation and Development that is looking for projects. They are going to do a nursery outreach program in Marin and Sonoma. Kate is in the information gathering stage. There is a lot of interest in trying to address the invasive species issue. They are considering contacting larger nurseries with the DPP brochures.

Drew Ready asked if anyone is working with CDFA to get more wildland pests listed so we have regulatory power.

Mark Newhouser - Although this issue is being worked on, it will never be enough due to the political nature of the process. It took years to list 8 plants. It is a time consuming, long, painful process but should be on-going.

Stephen Jones – There is also the issue of insufficient funding for enforcement.

Kate Symonds asked what we can do as citizens and professors to address this issue.

Stephen Jones suggested linking the issue to agricultural applications to increase funding. He also suggested linking the Cal-IPC and CDFA websites.

Mark Newhouser mentioned the Marin-Sonoma WMA outreach to all listed nurseries and landscapers. They included a combined list of bad plants in their mailing (combined from CNPS, Cal-IPC, and CDFA). There was no feedback mechanism so they don't know how effective the mailing was.

Terri Kempton agreed that we need a stick (regulations) but it is a long, difficult, reactive process; not a preventative process with collaboration. A collaborative process can address new threats on the horizon.

Mark Newhouser wrapped up the session by thanking people for coming and hopes that we all continue to interact.

Participant List

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