

nurserymen, take pleasure in having the Society meet here.

Connecticut has a long history of nurseries. The first, evidently, was owned by George Fenwick of Saybrook, as early as 1641. At that time he was producing apple, cherry and peach trees. Henry Wolcott, Jr. was also selling fruit trees as early as 1648.

One of the early booms in the Connecticut nursery industry came in the late 1700's and early 1800's when thousands of mulberry trees were produced to feed silk worms for the silk industry, which lasted in this area for about 50 years. Unfortunately, the silk boom collapsed in 1839 leaving thousands of mulberry trees and a lot of lonesome worms.

Today the Connecticut nursery industry devotes over 6,000 acres of land to the production of trees and shrubs. Horticulture-floriculture comprises the fourth largest segment of Connecticut agriculture, exceeded only by dairy, poultry and tobacco, and we are fast moving up on tobacco. In fact, some of our finest Connecticut nurseries are run by ex-tobacco men who are now in the nursery business.

Although a wide variety of plant material is grown here, *Taxus* does extremely well in our climate and makes up a large portion of our production for shipment to mid-western markets.

So with that brief background, let me just say that the 200 members of the Connecticut Nurserymen's Association welcome you to Hartford and hope you have a very enjoyable and rewarding stay in Connecticut.

HAROLD TUKEY: Our first speaker for the formal session of our program is a farm advisor in one of the bustling nursery producing areas of our country — and that is Los Angeles County. He is going to tell us about an interesting new development in southern California — a marketing system which has been devised for growers in the southwest Los Angeles County area. I am pleased to introduce Mr. Richard Maire.

**MARKETING WHAT IS PROPAGATED:  
SOME EXPERIENCES FROM THE GOLDEN WEST**

**RICHARD G. MAIRE**

*Cooperative Extension, University of California  
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The question is often asked of me, "What does a farm advisor do in urban Los Angeles County?" To clarify the term "farm advisor;" this corresponds to the county extension agent in most states. As a member of the staff of the Cooperative Extension in Los Angeles County, it is my major responsibility to assist the wholesale nursery growers in any way possible. What does this mean? Los

Angeles County is the largest wholesale nursery-producing county in the world with over 600 wholesale nurseries ranging in size from a city lot to 400 acres. Their annual gross value according to the Agricultural Commissioners' crop report is \$41 million, and increasing. How are they increasing? By becoming more efficient in their production techniques and by the leasing of land beneath the power lines, the only open land within economic reach for agricultural production. With my connection with plant production, it is only natural that landscape architects, contractors, pest control operators, professional gardeners, retail nurserymen and parks departments call on me for assistance. As a point of interest, there are some 75 cities in Los Angeles County with a population of 100 thousand and up, all with parks departments and all with plenty of problems. As long as they are commercial or professional people, we do our best to service all requests. Due to a lack of staff, we have given only token assistance to homeowners. We get thousands of calls but all are handled by phone or through University of California or USDA pamphlets and bulletins by our public service advisor. We are giving our responsibility in this area serious consideration to determine how we might be more effective in helping the urban population with information.

In California production of nursery products has been on a continuous rise. From 1966 to 1971 it increased from \$150 million to \$227 million in the state. In Los Angeles County the pattern is much the same. It might be interesting to note how this production in Los Angeles County is divided as to crops: ornamental trees and shrubs, \$25½ million; bedding plants, approximately \$4 million; ground covers, \$2½ million; indoor foliage plants, \$2½ million. It is estimated that about 75 to 80 percent of this production is shipped out of Southern California.

As the title of my talk states, I am to cover the marketing of these products. Of course, all normal marketing procedures are used. Our larger producers have salesmen in all areas of the United States. Many have conglomerates such as nursery and landscape contracting within their company, and are using their own production for their large landscape jobs. Specifically, I want to tell you about the Gardena Valley Nursery Growers Co-op. At present 24 nurseries are members and all are located in southwest Los Angeles County, most of them in the city of Gardena.

With urbanization accelerating, several small nurseries started moving out of the heavily populated southwest area. And in order to let customers know they were still very much there, growers organized to publicize their area and the production available. Customers also needed a central source to find plant material available. The Cooperative Extension Service, with the cooperation of several key growers, contacted every producer of nursery

products in the southwest section of the county and invited them to a meeting to consider organizing a cooperative for promotion of Gardena Valley. Fifty-five nurseries were reported at the initial meeting and according to a rough tabulation, reported a total gross figure of approximately \$5½ million. At this meeting, with the help of the University of California, the growers decided to form a cooperative.

The first year their main emphasis was on education, and 3 or 4 meetings were held each month first to inform members of the concept of a co-op and second to assist them with production techniques. Plant inventories were very sketchy or did not exist. In order to gather inventory information data processing was employed. The educational meeting attempted to accomplish several things. The first was to get growers to work together. Second in importance was an educational program to change growers practices from crude monthly bookkeeping to more sophisticated data processing, and third was to arouse in the growers awareness of the cost of doing business. In order to do this cost studies were conducted by the University.

One of the greatest hurdles that had to be overcome, and even yet presents problems, is the fact that most of the member nurseries are family operations. There exists a wide communications gap among family members. Consequently, cooperation was not always as dependable and constant as would be desirable. Once the growers were organized in a co-op for promoting Gardena Valley products it was decided that cooperative marketing would be a great advantage. As individuals they were not large enough to compete in the mass market outlets. As a cooperative of 24 nurseries their production was great enough to effectively bid for mass market sales. Flexibility was built into the cooperative, allowing members to continue operating as independent nurseries as well as supplying plant materials to the co-op. This presented serious problems for the co-op sales during the first years since there was no way of being sure of plant availability. This problem is now being overcome by the latest trend in crop production and marketing; that is, contract growing for future sales. With the inception of contract growing, growers are now being forced into programming. Procedures had been to "guesstimate" what they sold previously and what might be required for the next year since no accurate records were kept by many.

Quality control also presented an obstacle to co-op marketing. Each grower produces differently and each has a different opinion as to what is top quality. Visitations are now being made each week by co-op members to observe materials contracted for and to determine if they meet co-op standards of quality.

The Gardena Valley Co-op has had its problems, but on the whole much good has been derived from it as evidenced by its survival. Above all, growers have learned to work together and share ideas; the same objective that we enjoy and benefit from being in the International Plant Propagators' Society. Of course, not to be overlooked is the current year's sales for the Gardena Valley Nursery growers. This extra business has increased from \$150,000 the first year to between 3/4 and one million dollars just four years later.

One additional development that could directly affect marketing of nursery products is the formation of the California Environment Landscape Council. This is a group of organizations involved in any aspect of landscape maintenance and supply banded together for improvement of communications and education. It has long been recognized that there is a serious breakdown in communication between the landscape architect who writes the specs, the contractor who puts in the plants and the maintenance gardener who is responsible for keeping the end result attractive and alive. The organizations presently participating include the following:

#### **CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENT LANDSCAPE COUNCIL**

1. California Association of Nurserymen
2. Nursery Growers Association
3. A.I.L.A, American Institute of Landscape Architects
4. A.S.L.A, American Society of Landscape Architects
5. C.L.C.A, California Landscape Contractors Association
6. Landscape Designers
7. Street Tree Seminar
8. Southern California Turfgrass Council
9. Southern California Park & Recreation
10. Southern California Gardeners Federation
11. Southern California Gardeners Council
12. Northern California Gardeners
13. Golf Course Superintendents
14. Nursery and Landscape Suppliers
15. News media — Trade magazines
16. University of California — (as Advisors)

Great strides have been made in marketing Southern California nursery products as evidenced by the high percentage of production shipped out of Southern California and the expanded marketing area. There is still much to be done and improvements to be made; the University and the growers will constantly work to expand, increase, and improve the quality of nursery production in Southern California.

**HAROLD TUKEY:** Thank you very much for an excellent

presentation, Dick. Does anyone have a question they would like to ask at this time?

LES HANCOCK: He mentioned one thing which I would like to comment on; quite frequently the architects put plant materials in their plans which may not even be available in our area of Canada. I think it is very important that there be communication between the architects and the nurserymen with respect to plant materials designated on contracts. I believe it is quite uneconomical to have to bring in plants from as far away as 500 miles when there are often plants available locally that are even better suited to the situations designated on the plans. I wonder if Mr. Maire has any comments concerning this?

R. MAIRE: I believe the Council which we are trying to organize is an answer to this situation. Most of the architects know far in advance of big jobs of plant materials that will be needed. We are attempting to stimulate cooperation so that the architects will let nurserymen know what types of plant materials will be needed and when. Communications with the landscape architect is essential and several years ago we began holding a seminar for them at the the University of California Lake Arrowhead Conference Center. One day of their 4 day conference is devoted to things such as plant materials, soils, water, etc. and though they were at first reluctant to accept this, this is the area of the program that now brings forth the most enthusiasm.

JIM WELLS: I have several questions which will require just short answers. How was this organized? Who is the paid executive at the head of the organization, and who pays him? How do they get revenues to keep the organization running?

R. MAIRE: It was organized by the growers at an organizational meeting; we served mainly as advisors to aid in pulling it together. There is no paid executive at the present time, though I think this is one thing they will have to do in the future to make the operation more efficient. The board conducts all of the business but there is one unpaid individual who acts as secretary-treasurer taking orders. Revenues are derived from a membership fee and a percentage of the sales which the grower has through the co-op. Revenues in excess of those needed for operation are given back to the growers on a prorata basis. One of the keys to the success of the co-op is apparently the option of selling to it or not, as the grower may choose. Also this is not a competitive organization which is taking over sales from the growers but rather one which is going out and finding new markets.

HAROLD TUKEY: We now move across the country to New York. Our next speaker was with New York City in another capacity and did very well at it, but then decided he wanted to do something

different so he brought his business expertise to the nursery business. Jim Cross has been a tremendous cooperater and he has some new insights on how to do things. I think you will enjoy the comments that he has to make.

## PROPAGATION IS JUST THE BEGINNING

JAMES E. CROSS

*Environmentals*

*Cutchogue, New York*

This morning I want to talk a bit about that phase of programmed production which *immediately* follows propagation. It is the process of producing the so-called "liner" which will then go into the field, or a container of some sort, to be grown on to whatever size your particular market or needs require. My comments will be partial to container growing but the same process would apply if the plants were to be grown on in mother earth.

This initial phase of growing cannot and should not be separated from propagation — it should be a continuation, without interruption of the process begun in the propagation bench. Whatever you wish to call this phase, it should be associated in your mind with **Growing** — for all too often this phase is begun and even continued more as a holding process than as a fully managed growing operation.

We put in all that effort to get new plants started, so why lose the momentum achieved in the propagation house. I assure you that there is a form of momentum involved. For any of you who do not think in these terms, listen carefully to Dr. Krizek's presentation this afternoon, or tomorrow's panel on "Systems" for rhododendrons.

There is one prime characteristic of commercial horticulture which separates it from all other industries. This is the very long lead time between the decision as to what plants to propagate and grow and the point of eventual sale or other disposal. Try to think of another industry which even approaches commercial horticulture in this unfortunate respect. Even new passenger airplanes and large custom boilers have lessened their development and production period to less than ours.

This industry characteristic points up very sharply two aspects of plant production where application of more management time can pay off like no other.

1. First, the initial decision as to which plants to grow and in what quantities. With a 2, 4 or 6 year production cycle, it should be obvious that we need well-programmed production more than any other industry.