

# News & Views

*for New Hampshire's Green Industry*

July-September, 2003

## ***Improve Garden Center Sales with Informational Signs***

There are five types of signs that require attention at garden centers:

- Road signs
- Directional signs
- Department signs
- Price signs
- Informational signs

The sign least commonly used is the informational sign. This sign is especially important for boosting sales of new and unusual plants and hard goods. A major reason why customers shop at different garden centers, according to surveys, is to find new and unusual items.



Water gardening is a relatively new activity. The risk of failure is high unless customers are well educated about new products. Brigg's Garden Center, North Attleboro, MA.

Family-owned garden centers generally take pride in the superior quality of plants they grow and sell. This ultimately reflects the owner's pride in his or her business. If management placed equal emphasis on the success of its customers with the products they purchased, sales would increase proportionately. In addition, fewer sick plants would be returned allowing for a more lenient guarantee policy.

Many garden centers have trained staff to answer questions and solve plant problems. During busy periods, however, customers often have their questions left unanswered. Informational signs are a viable substitute for answering the most frequently asked questions and conveying a message that you really care about your customers' success. It is complimentary to many of the information delivery methods that you now use or should use, such as demonstrations, personal contact, informational fact sheets, or talks by sales staff.

Informational signs may provide either a temporary or permanent message. All permanent signs should have the same uniformity or consistency as all other types of signs regarding their style, construction materials, letter type, color and size. Signs constructed of laminated plywood with a plastic surface are durable in our climate. Letters of Roman or Gothic-style are more readable than script or block lettering; avoid mixing more than two styles of lettering. The

most legible color combinations are green and white, black and white, yellow on green, and navy blue on white.

The temporary signs used in advertising upcoming events or festivals may be totally different for maximum impact. Large signs may be of rigid construction while smaller ones are computer-generated and laminated.

Most garden centers do a good job with picture cards and care information regarding the plant's flower color and size at maturity, time of bloom, hardiness, growth habit, and susceptibility to pests, as well as cultural requirements for soil, moisture, light, support and wind protection. If any of this information is lacking on your signs, it should be included in fact sheets.

"How-To" signs are often lacking at garden centers. Demonstrations and displays show customers how to use products while signs can provide step-by-step instructions, such as how to plant and prune shrubs, fertilize lawns, water newly planted sod, construct and maintain a water garden, how to train plants on a trellis, control pests safely, how to use lights in the landscape, or how to make a wreath. A plastic trunk liner with your logo is

also very effective in providing planting and watering information.

Customers often need help in selecting plants for special purposes. A combination of signage, fact sheets and demonstrations are effective in helping customers select plants for various habitats; sun, shade, wet/dry soils, windbreaks, rock gardens, steep slopes, raised beds, ground covers beneath trees, plants for deer and other wildlife, or plants unattractive to deer. A "Plants For Special Purposes" sign will meet this need.

More suggestions for informational signs:

- Services We Offer:
  - Full service florist
  - Landscape design plans
  - Landscape installation and maintenance
  - Gardening advice
  - Free repotting of plants purchased here
  - Wreath making classes
  - Tree loading
- Use signs to promote. Example: "Dwarf Grass - Save time in mowing, doesn't invade flower borders, drought tolerant, and shade tolerant."



Picture cards are standard for educating customers about flower color and cultural requirements. A stand constructed of pvc pipe is filled with sand to prevent the sign from blowing over. DuBrow's, Livingston, NJ.

### Services Offered



Use signs to inform customers of all the services you offer. Vinny's, Wallingford, CT.

- Personalize your farm showing its history, awards, and professional association memberships.
- Display a quality and guarantee policy statement.
- Include “Welcome” on the entrance sign and “Thank you” on the exit sign.
- Don’t use negative signs, such as: “No Littering,” instead say “Please Place Trash In Bins.”

The text for many of your informational signs can be found in our *“Home & Garden Information Fact Sheet Notebook.”* To order, mail a check or money order payable to UNH Cooperative Extension for \$99, plus shipping and handling \$7.75, to UNH Coop. Extension Publications Center, 16 Nesmith Hall, 131 Main St., Durham, NH 03824. All of the fact sheets in this publication, plus several new ones can be found on our web site, <http://www.ceinfo.unh.edu>.

**David Seavey**



Garden centers show very little consistency regarding guarantee policies. An educated customer doesn’t return plants. Great Swamp Greenhouses, Gillette, NJ.

## Pesticide Applicator Training

New Hampshire’s Pesticide Applicator Training (PAT) program helps pesticide applicators learn to use pesticides in the safest, most effective manner, to control pest infestations, while minimizing adverse effects on the health of humans and the environment.

Prior to July 1, 2003, UNH’s Dr. Stan Swier was the Pesticide Safety Education Coordinator and point of contact for the NH PAT program. Since July 1<sup>st</sup>, the PAT program has undergone a change of location, and a shift in staff responsibilities has occurred.

Rachel Maccini is also with UNH Cooperative Extension, and is now the point of contact for all NH PAT program activities. Rachel is taking on the transition of responsibilities through October 1<sup>st</sup> 2003, and welcomes the opportunity to serve as PAT Pesticide Safety Education Coordinator. Rachel Maccini is currently also the coordinator for the UNH Cooperative Extension Family Home and Garden Education Center.

Materials and publications, to include Pesticide Manuals specific to each commodity group and commercial category as well as commodity spray guides and insect and disease fact sheets are now available at the UNH Cooperative Extension Family Home and Garden Education Center in Manchester, NH. The Family Home & Garden Education Center is located at 200 Bedford Street, Manchester, NH 03101. Any PAT questions or material requests can be directed to Rachel Maccini at (603) 629-9494 ext. 130.

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## Fighting Diseases on Ornamentals

An Outreach Seminar sponsored by UNH Cooperative Extension and the Northeast Division of APS  
**October 24, 2003** at the Wayfarer Inn, Bedford, NH

Topics include Salt, Drought & Winter Injury (Ann Gould, Rutgers), Foliar Nematodes (Jim LaMondia, CT Ag. Exp. Sta.), Pythium Management in Greenhouses (Gary Moorman, Penn State), Phytophthora in Nurseries & Greenhouses (Margery Daughtrey, Cornell), Botrytis on Annuals & Perennials (Rob Wick, UMASS), Conifer Diseases (Sharon Douglas, CT Ag. Exp. Sta.).  
 3-4 pesticide credits applied for. \$30 For additional information contact Cheryl Smith (862-3841).

## Summer and Fall Events

- Aug 6 Summer Expo** - New England Nursery Association and NH Plant Growers Association - at Pleasant View Gardens, Loudon, NH. Exhibits, Education, Networking, Nursery Tours, New England Clambake, and Recreation....For more information, call NENA at 508-653-4112, or download the registration form from [www.nensyassn.org](http://www.nensyassn.org).
- Educational seminars include
- Lesions Cankers & Blights, Oh My!* by Cheryl Smith
  - New England Plants: What Caught My Eye* by Warren Leach
  - Mature Shade Tree Pruning* by Chester Parady
  - New Hampshire's Invasive Species Situation: Updates & Plant Alternatives* by George Thimm and Cathy Neal.
- Sept 18 NHLA Twilite meeting: Managing Turf and Landscape Fertilization and Protecting Water Quality.** John Roberts and Cathy Neal, UNH Cooperative Extension. Free; for times and directions to site, call NHLA at 800-639-5601 or UNHCE at 603-862-3200.
- Sept 19-20 Invasive Plant Summit.** Framingham, MA. For agenda and registration information, contact Keyna Welenc, US Fish and Wildlife Service at 413-253-8302.
- Oct 3-6 American Society for Horticultural Science, Centennial Conference.** Providence, RI. Program and registration info on the web at [www.ashs.org](http://www.ashs.org).
- Oct 19-21 New England Intl. Society of Arboriculture Conference.** South Portland, ME. For information, go to [www.newenglandisa.com](http://www.newenglandisa.com).
- Oct 23-25 International Plant Propagators Eastern Region Meeting.** Portland, ME. The program will be posted at [www.ipps.org/EasternNA](http://www.ipps.org/EasternNA).
- Oct 24 Fighting Diseases in Ornamentals,** The Wayfarer Inn, Bedford, NH. For more information see page 3 of this newsletter.
- Nov 6 Retail and Garden Center Seminars.** Bedford, NH. More details will be mailed with next newsletter, but save the date!

For up to date information on events, check these websites:  
UNH Cooperative Extension Ag Calendar at  
[www.ceinfo.unh.edu](http://www.ceinfo.unh.edu) (Choose Agricultural Resources then Calendar.)  
NH Landscape Association at [www.nhlaonline.org](http://www.nhlaonline.org)  
NH Plant Growers Association at [www.nhplantgrowers.org](http://www.nhplantgrowers.org)

This newsletter is a cooperative effort of the Ornamentals Extension Educators and Specialists at the University of New Hampshire. It is published quarterly. Its purpose is to inform and update industry members on issues and research relevant to the production, use and maintenance of ornamentals and turf in New Hampshire. Contributors for this issue:

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Comments and questions are welcome...please call Cathy Neal at 603-862-3208. Address corrections, additions, and deletions should be faxed to 603-862-2717 or phoned in to Cheryl Estabrooke at 603-862-3200.

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