



Louisiana Nursery News

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1999
The Newsletter of the Louisiana Association of Nurserymen

Louisiana Nursery News is a newsletter produced by the Louisiana Association of Nurserymen as a member service. The opinions and statements expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of LAN, its staff, Board of Directors, or its editors. Likewise, advertisements do not constitute an endorsement of the featured products or services. ●

LSU
Agricultural Center

Poinsettia Open House

9:00 am - 4:00 pm
Friday, December 10th
Catfish Town Atrium
Baton Rouge, LA

For more information:
Jeff Kuehny
225/ 388-1043

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LAN Annual Membership Meeting

Friday, January 28, 2000 - 7:30 am

**Mobile Convention Center
Mobile, AL**

Contact: Allen Owings, 225-388-2222 or
Rick Webb, 504-748-5850

GULF STATES HORTICULTURAL EXPO

January 28 -29, 2000

(Education Sessions - January 27th)

**Mobile Convention Center
Mobile, AL**

Contact: Linda VanDyke
Phone 334/502-7777, Fax 334/502-7711

1999 LAN Officers, Board & Committees

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Wanda Chase, Rick Webb

TAN/MISSLARK Trade Show Representative

AllenOwings

Master Gardeners Branching Out Across Louisiana

The Louisiana Master Gardeners program is branching out across Louisiana.

Sponsored by LSU Ag Center and directed by county agents with it's Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service, the Master Gardeners program is active in several of the state's major metropolitan areas and an increasing number of parishes.

There are active networks of Master Gardener volunteers in Baton Rouge, Lafayette, Monroe, New Orleans and Shreveport, as well as the parishes surrounding those cities and a number of others- particularly in South Louisiana.

Extension Service area horticulturist Dr. Joe White of Shreveport characterizes Master Gardeners as some of the busiest volunteers in the LSU Ag Center system.

For example, he says the Shreveport group recently sponsored LeTour des Jardins '99 - a garden tour featuring six different styles.

"There was a sun garden, a shade garden, an all green garden, a country garden, a small urban garden and a water garden featured on the tour," White explained.

Master Gardeners not only volunteer their time in such tours and other educational activities about gardening, they also begin their volunteer careers with a course of instruction that includes 50 hours of classes on topics ranging from weed control to nuisance wildlife.

"The basic goals of the program are to show off good gardening practices and to reveal what's going on behind those backyard fences," White says.

Admission into the Louisiana Master Gardener program is open to anyone who has an interest in horticulture and a desire to help others.

Ag Center horticulture specialist and state coordinator of the Louisiana Master Gardeners program, Dr. Tom Koske, said the Master Gardener program started at Washington State University by the Cooperative Extension Service.

"Like most states, extension agents in the Seattle/Tacoma area were overwhelmed with horticulture questions, so they developed the Master Gardeners program in the early 70's to take some of the pressure off the extension agents," Koske explains, adding, "In Louisiana the program started in New Orleans as Master Vegetable Gardeners and was administered through the schools. The first LSU recognized Master Gardener programs were developed in 1993."

Trainees in the Louisiana Master Gardener program must attend 80 percent of the scheduled classes, pass an open-book examination and volunteer for a minimum of 40 hours of service to earn the title of Louisiana Master Gardener. ●

In Memoriam

The horticulture industry is saddened by the recent loss of long-time supporter Arthur A. "Buck" Jones. He served as president of SNA in 1995 and has been described as "Mr. SNA" due to his longtime work in support of that organization. Buck is survived by his wife, Mary Jane, two daughters, and five grandchildren.

The News

◆ LAN has a long standing tradition of providing scholarship support to undergraduate and graduate student in horticulture enrolled at Louisiana's universities. Two to three \$1,000 scholarships have typically been awarded annually. Starting in 2000 at the LAN annual membership meeting in Mobile, LAN is pleased to be awarding five \$1,000 scholarships. In addition, attempt will be made to provide scholarships to at least one student at each of Louisiana's four year universities having a horticulture program - these include: L.S.U., Southern, Louisiana Tech, and Southeastern Louisiana University.

◆ LAN teamed with the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry's Horticulture and Quarantine Division to provide an ornamental plant display at the recently held Baton Rouge State Fair. Thanks to Bracy's Nursery and Louisiana Growers for providing plant material.

◆ A Landscape Maintenance Workshop was held at the Calcasieu Agricultural Center office in Lake Charles on October 20. Participants heard presentations on dolomitic lime and sulfur use in the landscape, optimizing pesticide performance, crape myrtle evaluation results, and other reports on ornamental plant trials being conducted around the state. Future Landscape and Grounds Maintenance workshops are scheduled for February 8 in Calhoun and February 16 in Baton Rouge. Watch for upcoming details!

◆ LAN recently contributed \$1,000 to the Horticulture Research Institute (HRI). This is the "research funding" area of ANLA and provides

valuable extramural funding for ornamental horticulture projects at land-grant universities across the United States. *

2000 Gulf States Horticultural Expo

"The Premier Winter Trade Show of the South"

Dates:.....	January 27 - 29, 2000
Educational Opportunities.....	January 27 8:00am - 5:30pm
Show Hours.....	January 28 9:00am - 5:00pm January 29 9:00am - 3:00pm
Location.....	Mobile Convention Center 1 South Water Street Mobile, AL 36602

- 535 Booth Trade Show
- Thursday Night (Roussos) Reception
- New Plant Varieties
- New Products
- Ladies Program
- ANA Golf Classic
- Education Opportunities featuring
 - Dr. Allan M. Armitage
 - Dr. Lawrence Helms
 - Mr. Phil Nilsson
 - and many more



For More Information Contact:
The Gulf States Horticultural Expo, Inc.
P.O. Box 47
Auburn, Alabama 36831-0047
Voice: 334.502.7777 Fax: 334.502.7711



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www.monroe.org

**January 14-15, 2000
Monroe Civic Center - Monroe, Louisiana**

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Margaret Guillory

Master Gardener - New Orleans

Adrienne McLain

McClendon's Nursery

Tracy Leonard

Tanya Conard

Individuals

Carlos Doolittle

Robin Everitt

Laura Hanford

Catherine Welles

Whole-Farm Planning Aids Sustainability

A whole-farm plan is an annual summary of farm resources, enterprises, and sources and amounts of anticipated income and expenses. The whole-farm plan may be for the current year or the upcoming year. This plan is much more than developing a budget, but the budget is the key building block of the whole-farm plan. The budget outlines the details of the operation, such as fertilizer, seed, chemical application rates, and feed rations for livestock. With the aid of whole-farm planning and budgeting, the profitability and likely consequences of alternative methods of operating the business can be analyzed.

The seven steps of whole-farm planning are as follows:

1. Formulate annual goals and objectives - These may include the desired standard of living for the farm family, productivity of the land, protection of the environment, health and well-being of the operator and workers, and quality of life for the farm family.

2. Inventory available resources. The type, quality, and quantity of

resources available determine which enterprises can be considered in the whole-farm plan.

3. Identify possible enterprises - The resources inventory determines which crop and livestock enterprises - traditional or alternative, established or new - are feasible. After the possible enterprises are identified, requirements for capital, machinery, and labor in each enterprise will determine the maximum size of the enterprise(s) chosen and the mix of enterprises chosen.

4. Estimate gross margins - The gross margin is the difference between total estimated income and variable costs and must be estimated for each enterprise identified in step three. A positive gross margin will contribute to fixed costs and profit. The larger the estimated gross margin, the greater the (short-run) profit.

5. Choose a combination of enterprises - After completing steps 1 - 4, the manager will want to weigh personal preference, experience, investment requirements, and regional advantages when making a choice of enterprises.

6. Prepare a whole-farm budget - The budget will estimate income expenses, and profit; evaluate alternative farm plans; summarize resources; and serve as a means of communicating the farm plan to the lender, landowner, partner, or stockholder.

7. Implement, monitor, and revise annually - Some farmers think putting the plan in action is the most difficult phase. Each year if changes have occurred, the plan should be revised and updated to reflect the current circumstances.

Several computerized whole-farm planning tools are available. These tools enable alternative farm plans to be developed and compared to the current plan. This allows farmers a chance to try out their ideas on paper and evaluate if a change in a farm plan will enable the farmer to better achieve his/her goals. *

Malcolm L. Broome, Mississippi Cooperative Extension Service

TRADE SHOWS in 2000

Gulf States Horticulture Expo

January 28 -29, 2000

Mobile Convention Center

Mobile, AL

SNA - World Showcase of Horticulture

August 4 - 6, 2000

Georgia World Congress Center

Atlanta, GA

The Nursery/ Landscape Expo

August 18 -20, 2000

George Brown Convention Center

Houston, TX

First Stop Advertising...Then Grow

Philip Whitfield of Media Visions in Chicago, talked to attendees of the 1999 Management Clinic about getting the greatest return on advertising dollars. This article presents a wrap-up of Whitfield's remarks.

Philip Whitfield believes that businesses can divert dollars normally set aside for advertising and get a much bigger bang for that buck through public relations. He's got some experience to back up that claim.

Whitfield gained experience in the green industry when the chairman of the Chicago Horticultural Society asked him to help out with difficult issues at the Chicago Botanic Garden. The challenge centered on changes in leadership, fundraising, and membership development. Whitfield ended up running the marketing and business development arm of the Botanic Garden, taking that organization from 17,000 members to 30,000 members within 2 years. "I did that without spending on advertising or direct mail," he says.

Whitfield's first step was to identify issues that the Botanic Garden wanted to put before the public. At the same time, he identified logical message carriers—primarily the *Chicago Tribune*. Over the months, 15 front-page stories on the Garden appeared in the newspaper, stimulating a membership explosion and generating interest from landscape/nursery businesses in Chicago area, who also were asking for help in marketing. As a result, Whitfield's business is growing at 15-20 percent a year—all without spending advertising dollars. Whitfield is determined to find those same PR solutions for his clients.

Tactics That Work

At most garden centers, the main concern is about getting ready for spring. In other words, "What's going to sell?" Whitfield describes the experience of three clients.

■ "[One client's] advertising program hadn't been very successful. The first year, they did information-based advertising in the *Garden Gazette*, focusing on sales items. The second year, the company ditched the *Gazette*, but they found that customers missed it. As a member of Tru-Serve Home Garden Showplace, the company could produce an 8-page color flyer for a penny. It cost 15 cents to mail, so the total cost was 16 cents. For the same money they spent last year, this company is now going to be able to do provide both gardening information and boost product sales."

■ In another example, the approach took every possible dollar out of Yellow Pages advertising and put those dollars into direct mail, planted the front of the shop with flowers, and made improvements to the front of store—non-advertising investments that were all included in the advertising budget.

■ In yet another case, Whitfield helped another nursery/garden center generate \$106,000 worth of advertising by writing stories for newspapers and features on TV. The company also launched a Web site in the second half of the year.

"There is a great difference between placing an advertisement and placing a comprehensive story. The stories reached more than 7 million subscribers through the 29 newspaper features written that appeared in a variety of newspapers and on TV and radio. As a result, we were able to continue repositioning these garden centers away from being product-related to the true value being created in those garden centers," Whitfield notes.

Listen to Customers

Success begins with knowing your existing customer base and their buying habits, says Whitfield. "Why do they come to you? Where do they come from? This information is very valuable in maintaining existing customers and targeting new customers."

In helping his clients, Whitfield began with some basic research. Four years ago, he took six customers from one store and six from another out for coffee and asked what they liked about the store. Customers responded that it was the people who serve them in the store, their knowledge. "The 80/20 rule applies in those garden centers. The 20 percent of customers that provide them with 80 percent of their profits said the most important thing for them was to have impeccable information, reliable information about plants or products they were buying."

The focus group looked for three important things from a garden center, Whitfield learned. "A lot of information, knowledge, and trends. Being seen through newspapers as suppliers of information—or seen as knowledgeable because the editor of *Tribune* or *Sun Times* calls on them to write article that positions them in 'Home' sections—makes these businesses appear to lead trends."

Advertising's Disadvantages

Whitfield notes that ads are designed to focus attention for a few seconds, prompting the reader to act right away. That doesn't work well in most media. Why? "You can't advertise all the topics—you have to focus on one issue. You just can't get into depth on issues that will motivate people to become your advocates."

PR Works Better

It's a myth, says Whitfield, that sales go up after advertising. "That depends on what you're advertising and how you advertise it. Are sales going up? Or is advertising focusing on giving a discount?"

It's also not true that advertising is more cost-effective than public relations. "How can it be more effective than the enormous impact of having a single column, in color, of a container garden, printed on the front page in the *Chicago Tribune*? I've seen cars lined up outside the garden centers just wanting that particular container."

Moreover, it's a myth that PR costs too much. "If PR is fee-based you know from the get-go how much it's going to cost, and it can be compared directly with advertising costs."

Advertising has other disadvantages, too. "You'll need six ads to make an impression in someone's mind that can be made with one story. Unless you buy a string of ads, they will have almost no impact on sales, so single placement of ads is a complete waste of money."

Whitfield also points to the expertise involved in designing a good ad. "It takes great skill—good copywriting and extremely good photography. To customize advertising, you'll have to commission a photographer to justify ad."

Finally, you need to ask whether your ad is going to be printed exactly to specification. "If it's a newspaper, that's doubtful; if it's a magazine, it's going to cost you a lot of money."

How to Get Good PR

The key to good PR is figuring out how you can help the newspaper editors develop interesting stories that they can feature in their papers.

"One of our clients writes a weekly column in the Home and Garden section of the *Sunday Daily Herald*. Surveys show that the H&G section is the most read, and that column is one of the most looked at sections. It's a substantial column,

with lots of information in it, which credits the company and carries the phone number and address. Writing this is a good use of staff time during the winter—and a good use of the staff's knowledge."

"In short," says Whitfield, "the advantages of PR is that it sets the tone of the company, offers promotion without limitation, is extremely cost effective, provides full-service, covers all bases, and objectively improves the firm's image, which you can customize by focusing on different parts of business. That enhances image, leading to more customers—which means more profitability."

More Tips for Good PR

1. To grow business, use info about existing customers, while you look for potential new customers. It's a three-step process of awareness, acceptance, and advocacy. Create awareness of who you are, the services you provide.

2. Create greater awareness by writing simple newsletters and putting these in newspapers directed at specific communities. Get ZIP codes from customers and use that info when putting newsletters together for placement in newspapers to be delivered to homes.

3. Work on your acceptance program so that people understand the benefits of the service. Host seminars and events. Bring in experts to talk about plants and how to grow better. Loyal customers become advocates of your garden center and word of mouth grows the business.

4. PR and marketing only supports a business plan. Identify what your company does. Target your audience for service, quality, and prices of your products.

5. Kids and their interests have a strong impact on women, who comprise the largest customer base for garden centers. Focus on reaching them.

6. Pet owners are an important constituency. If you want a cash flow continuing through winter, offer pet supplies, which encourage people to come into the store and shop.

7. If sales are under \$10 million,

you should spend about 5 percent on marketing. The higher sales go, the less you should be spending.

8. Create a promotional mix. For example, create a relationship with your local media. Offer the firm as a resource to photographers. Encourage the media to use your garden center as a place from which to broadcast.

9. Use direct mail. Don't focus on products, but do invite customers to talk about your store and their experiences with your garden center. Code a coupon in your newsletter to track where people are coming from. Publish newsletters 4 times per year—in early April, beginning June, in the fall, and over the holiday season. Have these newsletters bundled in with newspapers.

10. Encourage the spending of money on in-store events as opposed to advertising. Bring experts into the garden center to talk about how to plant things, different weather conditions, and so on.

11. Develop and use a Web site. Produce information sheets to post there. Update them monthly. Post a calendar of events. Feature new products and information about your staff. Even if you're not yet into e-commerce, use your Web site to reinforce your image. The key concept to convey is that your store is a place to make personal connection with customers. Try doing that by having staff favorites—pictures of your staff on the Web site. Graphics express warmth and a personal touch and are a great information resource. Rotate regular features quarterly. Update products monthly. The purpose of your Web site is not to sell products, but to let people find out about your store and to draw customers in. "The Pasquesi Web site is advertised by banner on the Web site of the Chicago suburban weekly Pioneer Press. The site costs about \$200/month and gets tens of thousands of hits."

12. In your marketing budget, do include point-of-purchase displays and joint promotions. Also, community outreach is very important.

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EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES IN 2000

- January 27** Gulf States Horticulture Expo Educational Seminars
Mobile Convention Center, Mobile, AL
- February 8** Landscape and Grounds Maintenance Workshop
Calhoun Research Station, Calhoun, LA
- February 16** Landscape and Grounds Maintenance Workshop
Burden Research Plantation, Baton Rouge, LA
- March 2 - 3** Certified Nursery Professional Manual Review & Exam
Burden Research Plantation, Baton Rouge, LA
- May 3** Retail Workshop - "Heart and Soul Service"
Location TBA, Baton Rouge, LA
- June 6 - 8** Mid-South Greenhouse Growers Workshop
Ramada Inn - Southwest Conference Center, Jackson, MS
- July 6 - 7** Certified Nursery Professional Manual Review & Exam
Barnwell Center, Shreveport, LA
- September 7 - 8** Certified Nursery Professional Manual Review & Exam
Botanical Garden Study Room, New Orleans, LA
- September TBA** 6th Annual Louisiana Plant Materials Conference
Location TBA, Baton Rouge, LA
- October TBA** Ornamental Pest Management Workshop
Hammond Research Station, Hammond, LA

Produced in association with Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service



Louisiana Association of Nurserymen

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Plan to attend - Details Inside

POINSETTIA OPEN HOUSE - Friday, December 19th

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References and prices for your area
are available upon request.



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