

INDIANA/ILLINOIS WINTER MEETING

January 26-27, 2018

Lebanon, Indiana

MARSHA GRAY—CHRISTMAS TREE PROMOTION BOARD

“It’s Christmas! Keep it real...” [or without the punctuation]. Gray presented the 2017 video. [Available online] followed by a Q & A.

Most of the campaign was done through social media, the Hallmark Channel and through local and national interview television. There were also presentations on recycling. There were 29 grower videos. There were lots of views. [From other sources: the campaign may working. Millennials were the target market. No mention of how effective the campaign was among millennials.]

The referendum on the CTPB will have a 30 day voting window in May to determine if the Board will continue.

Q: How much research funding? There are at least 7 universities working in Christmas Tree research. The dollar amount has been increased. Information is available through the board website.

The 12 minute loop is available on the CTPB website. There is a 30-minute that will be coming out soon. Growers linked to the CTPB campaign/organization will receive notice.

The slogan will be kept. Effort to continue connecting with the Millennial market will continue.

Facebook is the most used social medium, but it’s “for old people” There were links to Instagram, “mommy blogs” and others.

HEATHER TALLMAN—INDIANA GROWN

Promotes all agricultural products. This includes Christmas trees. The program is fully funded through the state. Tallman is an advocate for members. There are nearly 1,000 members. Christmas Tree farmers have a very specific set of needs. She wants to know what those needs are.

Tallman is charged with helping Indiana growers reach markets. Today, for all growers, almost everything happens on a smart phone. If you’re not comfortable doing marketing videos for/on social media, find someone closely connected to your farm who can do that work. Paying them to do it will be a good investment. Remember these are “platforms” for your business to stand on. In Indiana the “Grown” program will give you a liked web page of your very own for free, and give tutorials to do the work yourself.

Growers were also encouraged to diversify. Selling something at more than one season per year keeps your business in the public eye more of the year.

KYLE DANIEL—PURDUE UNIVERSITY—IPM WEED CONTROL

What is IPM [integrated pest management???

Record keeping is the key. Set thresholds. Monitor and identify. Apply.

Education. Learn about what you need . Scout, scout, scout—and not from whatever vehicle you’re riding in to look at your fields.

Know the life cycles of the weeds. Know the kinds of weeds. How do these pests spread? Seeds? Rhizomes?

Mechanical: mow, hoe, hand weed, cultivation.

Biological: Natural pests against insects, fungi or weeds. There’s a universe of research needed and great deal of time.

Cultivation of the soil gets rid of weeds and provides cold protection of the trees because the roots are forced deeper. Fescue is somewhat like walnut with tomatoes, also rye grass. Alilopathic???

Plant hormones???

Post emergent chemicals are more toxic and less effective than pre-emergent chemicals. ½ of the product in very early spring with the other ½ about 2months later. In fall, pre-emerge needs to go on in September. Flumioxin is one of the chemicals—Sureguard(?). A tank mix of the pre-emergent and

glyphosate in the fall can help. Daniel also recommended mulch. Some of the pre-emergent clung to the soil itself and to the mulch.

Growers need to know which herbicides are effective as pre-emergent control. And they need to know when to apply and how to do apply. What about incorporation?

For growers, whatever we do nearly always has to be done before bud break when the trees become are much more vulnerable.

Mare's tail can act like an annual or a biennial. Pre-emergent is much more effective.

There are websites that give the effectiveness of herbicides on specific species of weeds.

Daniel also recommended the constant flow valve for pump up sprayers.

Thistle: LONTREL (clopyralid) is safe over the top of trees to control thistles.

SEDGEHAMMER is used to control yellow nut sedge.

Equisetum is very difficult to control. This is not a plant that produces seeds.

PURDUE LANDSCAPE REPORT: Indiana growers can sign up for a bi-weekly newsletter devoted to the green industry.

Herbicide storage: can be long term under controlled conditions—not freezing/thawing or excessive heat or too much direct sunlight.

GARY HULBERT—INsafe—CHRISTMAS TREE FARM SAFETY

“INsafe” is part of the OSHA system. Indiana and Illinois have the same standards. OSHA has been around since 1970. OSHA does not cover family members of family farms. Actual employees are covered by OSHA. 26 states have their own programs. IL falls under federal. MI and CA have their own, stricter standards.

IMMINENT DANGER

FATALITIES: there will be an investigation. Reporting on the state and federal level required.

COMPLAINTS: can be filed by employees or other observers

Penalties are applied per violation.

Workers are more likely with employees with less than 1 year. Very long time employees also have high injury rates. Mondays and Fridays are the worst days. Between 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. is the worst block of time. Workplace violence is gaining a higher profile. In one case an employee was murdered during a robbery. The employer, a frequently robbed gas station, had done nothing to protect those behind the counter.

There is an incredibly high rate of injury in the construction industry. Electrocuting is always a danger.

STANDARDS THAT MAY APPLY [look these up!!!]

Records

There are other groups that have standards that OSHA may not. OSHA uses those standards also.

There are free OSHA posters, lists of information, and also published rules of how/what/who should comply.

Eyes: there are standards of eye protection: ANSE [??].

Respiratory protection needs a written respirator program. This includes record keeping and fit testing and medical evaluation.

Electrical: grounding, exposed live wires, missing or damaged pieces/parts, misuse of extension cords. We finally have GFCI outlets that can even work with extension cords. Ungrounded anything is completely unacceptable. Power strips are only for low amperage equipment—according to OSHA computers only. Dust in the air can be disaster waiting to happen,

Belts, pulleys, gears, cogs, rotating shafts of any kind. Grinders require a guard over the abrasive wheel although many stores do not sell guards on new grinders.

First Aid must be available within 3 to 4 minutes. This may require all employees to be trained at least on CPR. Bloodborne pathogens may also be a hazard. Emergency eye wash/shower need to be available in unimpeded access if corrosive chemicals are present.

The global harmonized system will, eventually one hopes, let all labels read alike.

INsafe deals with industrial hygiene. This lets you know if you need to fix any problems. Then you have to fix the problems.

LINDSAY WENNING—ISDH—VECTOR-BORNE DISEASES

Tick-bone diseases—these can happen because we are out in the open field.

Lyme disease—from the black-legged tick. A bacteria (in the same “group” as syphilis—I think. This is from the nymph stage of the tick. Tiny, but marked the same as the adult. One of the symptoms is a bulls-eye rash, which does not occur in all cases. Early lymes is flu-like symptoms. At a later stage of the disease there can be neuropathy, symptoms similar to Bell’s palsey. Treat with antibiotics.

Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever—also a bacterium. Transmitted by the adult tick. Looks a bit like measles, flu-like symptoms, dead tissue in the wound. Rash is on palms of hands. Underreported because of lack of serology tests.

Rodents—Hantavirus transmission—usually from the feces. A virus, respiratory, with a high mortality rate. Spread by aerosolizing the rodent feces. Wet the feces, sweep up the feces, wear gloves, and a mask.

Humans—influenza. You are contagious at least a day before symptoms and a couple of weeks after. The vaccine is from a killed virus. These vaccines are re-made every year and are the best statistical forecast of what will be “going around”. There is more than one strain included in the vaccine. In 2018 the worst strain is a “different” H3N2 [?] than is in the vaccine. But that is not the only strain of flu you can get. Some of those strains are in the vaccine. WASH YOUR HANDS, WASH YOUR HANDS! Use hand sanitizer when you can’t wash. Don’t forget the “Dracula cough cover”.

BREAK-OUT SESSIONS

INSURANCE: there is no one right answer. Do your homework. One company probably will not cover both liability and workman’s comp. TAXES: Christmas trees over 6 years old are taken as capital gains under 631A in the federal tax.

DESIGN TRENDS: Colors: purplish, blue, grey for 2018. For decorating wreaths: natural products such as sticks, berry canes, rose hips, bleached pine cones. Wreath making classes: customers bring drinks and snacks and spend their time making and decorating wreaths.

EMPLOYEES: most have a core group of employees. One grower used volunteer groups whose organizations were paid for their services—fundraisers. Owners tried to stay in front of the public as greeters/problem solvers.

CONCURRENT ACTIVITIES: for publicity allow groups to camp and make other uses of the property. Allow photographers to use the farm/trees as the photo venue, sometimes for a fee—or not. Pop-up markets for sale of niche market products. Host events: weddings, family reunions, outings. Movie nights: the charge is for anything but the movie. Easter egg hunts, pumpkin patches. Sale of bare root nursery stock.

THE KINGMAS have retired after 50 years. Everyone said thank you.

EVENING ROUND TABLE

WHAT DO YOU DO WITH STUMPS? Cut them very close to the ground then plant a foot or 2 away. Grind the stumps. Have a crew of stump cutters. [How was not discussed.]

WHAT DID YOU DO THAT WAS SUCCESSFUL/GRATIFYING? Brought in a food truck owned and operated by someone else, and had a place for customers to purchase what they bought. In addition to the very small cup of free hot chocolate, for purchase there was a larger cup of cocoa with whipped cream or the super-premium with whipped cream and a shot of rum or peppermint schnapps or rum. Those cocoas were in special cups.

HOW ARE WE FACING THE TREE SHORTAGES? Prices were raised. Individual growers are planting more trees. Bring in cut trees where a grower may have never sold cut trees and use marketing to give apparent—and real—added value to the pre-cuts. Comment: charge a fair price; know the ceiling and have a lower range. The room to mark up a wholesale purchase is limited. There is a shortage of seed for the nurseries to germinate.

WHAT ADVICE DO YOU GIVE TO GROWERS JUST STARTING OUT? Go visit as many growers as you can during selling season and also during the growing season. When you get established and you are working on your trees or trying to sell your trees you will not have time to go visiting. Some states have official mentor programs. Check with your county zoning about planting, building, and generally existing. Rotate your species, and some growers even plant crops other than trees. Know your flow of people.

JAMES FARMER, INDIANA UNIVERSITY—SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANTS

We filled out surveys about our farms.

TOM DULL, NCTA—NATIONAL UPDATE

NCTA and CTPB are separate entities and perform separate tasks. Shortage, well.... Supply issues? Yes, there were and are. What is demanded in an area may not grow well in that area. That fact creates problems.

The “tree locator” has been re-done. 137,000 used the locator. Over 300,000 used the website. Most of the “hits” were on mobile phones.

NCTA shares a lobbyist with the Am Hort. [assoc.??] The fact that NCTA puts a Christmas Tree in the White House and in the home of the Vice President. Trees for Troops is run through Christmas Spirit Foundation. Over 200,000 so far. 17,000 in 2017.

Results of the 2017 surveys will be on the national website in Feb/March.

The new officers of NCTA were announced. They meet monthly by phone conference.

The industry is almost a victim of its own success. We need to educate our customers and the public in general about how long we need to grow our trees. Our campaigns are succeeding.

KIMMIE DEVANEY, ISDA—AGRITOURISM

Between the ag dept. and the tourism dept., the non-farm public is coming to farms to learn about (1)food, (2)holiday items/activities, (3)culture/lifestyle in general [more or less].

30% of US travelers go for food/drink. Different generations go for different experiences. Millennials are often a target market because they will continue in the experience longer. The Millennials’ kids seem to want interactive experiences.

IN wants to improve the agritourism experience, mostly through food. The businesses themselves have a guide online to their zoning practices, public health, and other regulating bodies in each county. Businesses need to know where/how to operate within the system—how to navigate it.

Counties/cities/areas also need to be educated about agritourism in those areas.

The agritourism people hold webinars to educate businesses in requested topics which include marketing is social media, bringing in partners, business planning.

The state tourism website includes agritourism sites. These businesses invest in having their information on the site, but the investment provides a very wide coverage in terms of which electronic

medium can be used to get information about that business. Having a linked website for the business linked into the state site is also a good investment.

Liability insurance is another concern where the agritourism division of the dept. of ag can help with. There is a direct link with Indiana Grown. The advocates work in the same office.

JANA BECKERMAN, PERDUE UNIVERSITY—CANAAN FIR PATHOLOGY

The Perdue Plant Doctor app is available for your smart phone or a website. Apps are continually updated.

Tree doctor lets you click on a species and a problem. There will be—some day—a professional app.

FOLIAR DISEASES OF CONIFERS—and these can happen on stressed or healthy plants.

Fungi enter leaves through the stomates (the ‘breathing holes’ of the leaves). The fungus invades the interstitial areas of the leaves and rob nutrients and block gas exchange and water uptake resulting in interference with photosynthesis. Young needles are infected from older needles. Multiple sprayings per year are necessary over a period of several years.

Fungicides can be lethal to the pathogen, but they do develop resistance. The fungicide needs to work on the fungus in more than one way. Fungicides are more effective when used early. If you see one pustule, you need to spray. Maybe you need to spray before see pustules. Spray for needlecast disease as the buds begin to break. The spraying needs to be repeated. Bravo, Pegasus are 2 of the labels—WHICH NEED TO BE FOLLOWED. Heritage, Chlorothalimal(?). The infection period occurs once in the early spring, so control is possible.

Rhabdocline needlecast is also found in Douglas fir. There is not as much of this, and the disease has a different appearance from Swiss needlecast.

Conifers need several years’ needles for proper photosynthesis. The fact that we have heavy, moisture –holding clay soils is a detriment. Planting too close so trees cannot get air circulation under humid conditions—which conifers don’t like either.

Herbicide damage can be mistaken for an actual plant disease.

Phytophthora root rot and crown rot are endemic in heavy clays. Again too much water. There can be disease foci. The disease will spread in a circle from a single “point” in a circular pattern. Phytophthora is an equal opportunity infector. This oomycete is not species-specific.

Buy healthy stock, keep the soil well-drained, sanitation/housekeeping [get rid of the dead/infected plants], rotate species [some species are less susceptible than others], use fallowing if at all possible. If you’re wondering what’s going on, get the plant and or the soil tested. There is more than one kind of phytophthora with some species worse than others. If you use fertilizer, use it sparingly.

Most of the treatments are drenches to treat the soil. Adorn, Alude, Subdue, are 3 possible fungicides for phytophthora.

Perdue Landscape will have a .org [?] for professionals [perduelandscape.org] is in the works. It should be online in the near future. You may need to call to get specific instruction to gather the correct samples.