



PERRY LABORATORY

HORTICULTURAL ADVISING AND TESTING

Summer 2007 Thoughts

As summer progresses, it seems that everyone is cruising along. Here on the West Coast, we have had a fairly warm and mild summer. In the month of July, there was much less coastal fog this year. Normally we have early morning and late evening fog, which keeps things very cool, and sweatshirts or jackets are required. However this year we have been lucky to not need the warmer clothing as much.

In the cut flower industry, everyone is definitely into the summer mode. The markets were somewhat slow in the spring, however the summer event market has been good through July. There are the usual insect and disease pressures this year for most growers. There is more emphasis on using biological control measures as a part of larger programs rather than relying solely on them. There was a considerable outbreak of thrip earlier in the spring months and they were hard to control with the pesticides available at the time. With resistance to chemicals still a major issue, the use of predator insects along with softer chemicals has led to better control of target pests.

The container nursery industry has been hit fairly hard with the Light Brown Apple Moth (LBAM) this year. Although the nurseries are not quarantined as with Sudden Oak Death (SOD), if a single moth or larvae is found, the whole nursery must be sprayed before any plants can be shipped. This has affected both wholesale and retail nurseries in our area and is very costly for many operations. We have had a plethora of federal agents from various agencies, from pest control to border patrol agents, in our area to inspect for this insect. As one would expect, there are horror stories about the naiveté of these agents and how they just walk onto properties and start looking around. The good thing is that the market was and is still very good this year, with many nurseries reporting that sales are still moving well.

The potted plant industry has also had its problems with the LBAM and had to endure the inspections as well. This year has been a good year for these nurseries too, and there is considerable effort at this time to fill the growing areas with plants for the upcoming holiday seasons. We are now beginning the poinsettia season and it seems that there is a slight increase in the number of plants being grown this year compared to last year.

The landscape industry has also had a fairly good year, although there does appear to be somewhat less work. This may be related to the slowing of the real estate market and less building of new construction. There has been some work in replacing landscapes that had been affected by the freeze in January and this has kept some companies going.

The turf industry also seems to be cruising along, although there seems to be less play at our local golf courses of late. There are more specials being promoted as the courses try and fill those tee times.

With the slowing of our economy, there seems to be some slowing of the various horticultural industries as well. We are after all, part of the big picture too. In many cases the fairly good business climate of earlier in the year is carrying many businesses through the slow down, and hopefully things will pick up again soon.

Cliff Low