



# IPM:

## Powerful Potential

**Integrated Pest Management helps growers protect the environment while offering the industry new marketing opportunities.**

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Integrated pest management (IPM) will play an increasingly important role in the ornamental horticulture industry, according to a committee that discussed the subject for the “Fresh Ideas” room at the Florida Nursery and Allied Trades Show.

“There is a greater awareness within the industry for more environmentally friendly practices,” says **Timothée Sallin** of **Cherry Lake Tree Farm** in **Groveland, FL**. Although the techniques and practices of IPM aren’t necessarily new, the concept is connecting with other aspects of the industry in new and interesting ways, he says.

For growers, IPM will be a valuable tool as Florida continues to urbanize, stresses **Norm Leppla**, professor of IPM and biological control at the University of Florida in **Gainesville**. “There isn’t one grower in Florida who isn’t facing some urbanization issue that may curtail their operation in one way or another,” he says. Some counties in Florida

are even passing local ordinances regarding chemical applications, he says. “The whole urbanization issue isn’t going to stop.” According to **Leppla**, IPM offers a way for growers to run their operations while accommodating an increasing urban population. “There’s a lot we can do with IPM to assist growers in being good neighbors,” he says.

A unified, organized IPM program could offer growers a way to demonstrate to regulators and policymakers that ornamental horticulture producers are doing everything they can to be good neighbors and stewards of a healthy environment, agrees **Sallin**.

“You not only have to do things well, but you have to demonstrate that,” adds **Leppla**. “By establishing a set of acceptable practices, and veri-

fying that they are being followed, growers can show that they are protecting the environment.”

### Best Management Practices

“IPM will need to be seen as one component of an overall best management program,” according to **Sallin**. While best management practices (BMPs) have already been developed for the nursery industry, most of the focus has so far been on nutrient management and water-saving techniques. In the future, IPM will play an increasingly important role in the BMP process, he says.

BMPs are scientifically-developed production practices that represent the best available research and technology to maximize environmental protection while still maintaining economic viability for the producer. In many cases, when producers follow BMPs, and maintain records properly, they can receive a waiver of liability from the cost of environmental remediation, should it ever be necessary. Similarly, accepted BMPs often offer industries exemptions from increased regulations.

Currently, Florida has an “interim

### IPM Committee

The Fresh Ideas IPM committee included:

**Barbara Lawson**, IPM Florida  
**Norm Leppla**, IPM Florida  
**Timothée Sallin**, **Cherry Lake Tree Farm**  
**Daniel Sonke**, IPM Florida

## IPM Benefits

The IPM Fresh Ideas committee outlined the following opportunities for IPM adoption:

measure” BMP manual for container-grown nursery plants. The BMPs cover irrigation and fertilization practices. Nursery operators who submit a notice of intent with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services that they will implement the BMPs, and keep appropriate records, receive a waiver of liability regarding nitrate nitrogen groundwater contamination. Growers can view the BMP manual at [www.floridaagwaterpolicy.com/publications.html](http://www.floridaagwaterpolicy.com/publications.html).

Sallin suspects that IPM practices will similarly become part of the BMP process in the future.

### Marketing Opportunities

The increased environmental awareness among consumers has created a new market of buyers who are willing to pay premiums for products produced in an environmentally friendly manner, according to Sallin. Developers, golf courses, theme parks, and municipalities are all looking for ways to show their concern for the environment and safety for the general public. This offers opportunities for growers who follow IPM practices, he says. “Growers who want to find an edge have a first-to-market opportunity.”

According to Sallin, major buyers like Walt Disney World and other theme parks are using IPM techniques in their landscape maintenance programs to support their visitor-friendly persona. They are also interested in purchasing nursery material that is produced in a similar fashion.

**P**lants produced using IPM are generally of higher quality and can fetch top dollar. A market for environmentally friendly ornamental plants exists and is growing. Growers in the U.S. and Europe are already developing labels that are easily identified and preferred by environmentally oriented consumers who may pay premium prices for value-added products.

**A**s part of an overall BMP program, IPM guidelines could carry the weight of law in protecting a landowner who can show that he or she is following BMPs. That is, compliance with the BMPs can protect ornamental plant producers who are accused of causing pollution.

**I**PM can protect nursery employees and their employers by preventing problems caused by the misuse of pesticides.

**A**s part of an overall BMP program, IPM may be endorsed by state agencies as an alternative to more regulations. Widespread, voluntary adoption of IPM may prevent restrictive laws from being produced.

**G**rowers who use IPM utilize chemicals more effectively, reducing waste, producing healthier plants, and often saving money.

Developers, too, are looking for IPM-produced nursery material. An increasingly popular program developed by Audobon International is evidence of the growing importance of producing environmentally friendly plant material, says Sallin. Under the

Audobon Signature Cooperative Sanctuary Program, Audobon International works closely with planners, architects, and managers to ensure that biodiversity conservation, environmental quality, and sustainable management aspects are built into the project. By working with the group, developments attain an Audobon Signature designation. A large part of the program involves the installation, management, and irrigation of the landscape.

“It’s easy to see how IPM could become a part of this criteria,” says Sallin.

Municipalities, schools, departments of transportation, and other government agencies “where there is political pressure to be safe and environmentally sensitive” are also emerging markets for environmentally friendly nursery products, says Sallin.

### Money Matters

Sallin says that marketing and economics will necessarily have to play a role if adoption of IPM techniques is to be successful.

“In order for IPM to work, there has to be a marketing incentive,” he says. “The strength behind IPM is that the economic incentive converges with environmental goals.”

The next step, says Leppla, is to develop comprehensive IPM guidelines for the ornamental horticulture industry. Once those guidelines are developed, growers will be able to proactively follow them to meet stewardship, regulatory, and economic goals. ■

