

Welcome to Cleveland, Ohio, 2009[©]

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Good Morning, I want to begin by thanking all of you for coming, for it is your participation that makes this, Your Society, function.

I also, want to thank on behalf of everyone here, the local site committee who have done a heroic job of putting together a splendid group of tours and bringing to us the Ohio Secretary of Agriculture as our banquet speaker. If you see a local site person, look on their name tag, step up, and thank them personally if you can. They have done a great deal of work for us. This group includes: Brian Gilson, Carla Lee, Charles Tubesing, John Maslen, Kathy Kowalczyk, Mark Gilson, Rick Wenham, Tim Brotzman, and Vic Swanson

Next year, 2010, is our 60th anniversary. We began our Society right here in Cleveland some 59 years ago. From humble beginnings of a total of 69 members, we at one time reached a peak of near 750 members for the Eastern Region alone. Presently world wide we are at approximately 2000 members and a much reduced showing for the Eastern Region of 450. While most regions have experienced a decline in the last several years, we are collectively still the preeminent resource for plant propagation and production.

The future holds bright as we move past the printed page to the internet and the International Board is steadily working to posting all of the proceedings on the web so that everyone entitled to accessibility can get the necessary information at the click of a button. Many of us do not have all of the copies of the celebrated "Black Book" and these steps are being taken to remedy that dilemma.

We should all know that for probably more than any other organization we are responsible for the vast success for the nursery industry throughout the world.

But, our success has recently come with a price. We have been so efficient at disseminating information and technologies about plant propagation and production that some people do not consider us relevant anymore. Membership is dropping throughout the entire community of individual regions and with that there is an associated drop in attendance at these regional meetings.

The reasons for this decline are varied and perhaps we have done too good a job at educating any one that should want to learn how to propagate just about anything.

The nursery industry has changed, there are less and less small operations interested in propagation and more large-scale operations that through the power of progress have reduced their need for people. When I went to Denmark on the exchange program with the Scandinavian Region I went to a greenhouse facility that raises chrysanthemums year round. The total area of the greenhouse range was 6 acres and they had a total of 7 people running the entire system and one very large computer.

The everyday work was done by the computer and robots. Once you learn the techniques of raising chrysanthemums on a grand scale there is little need to come to the IPPS for more information. This is part of what is troubling our membership figures.

But, our work is far from over. We continue to address pressing problems. There is research to do, research to find solutions to things such as Sudden Oak Death,

lack of methyl bromide for soil sterilization, how to overcome the high costs of fertilizers and what will it take to tap into the vast resources of the tropics for essential disease fighting phytochemicals. We as a whole know virtually nothing about the asexual propagation of 99% of the woody plants from the tropics.

There will continue to be biofuel measures that will need to be addressed. What about invasive plants can they be controlled biologically, there is an increased need for germplasm storage and seed and genetic preservation programs need our expertise. All of these things and many more should and do fall under the umbrella of the IPPS.

We have to change to meet these challenges and to add to the overall progress for the future. We are not just about rooting *taxus* anymore. In fact I probably gave the last paper on *taxus* cuttings some 15 years ago.

In order to meet the challenges facing us and to rebuild our memberships and attendance at these meetings we need to do two things.

I am calling on each and everyone here to become a giant membership committee. Your job is to find new members, to tell them what we offer and how they can benefit from being here. Right now.

We have to assure them that these current economic times will be short lived and there is a bilateral need for them to be here. It is not merely what they can do for us, but also what we can do for them. We need to remind our colleagues who do belong to IPPS to bring some of their people, the very ones who will run the show in the future. Not only should IPPS be inspiring to them, it will also show them that the management of those nurseries appreciate their service and a trip to an IPPS meeting is a very promising reward for a job well done.

Hand and hand with this, is to reach out to your friends, colleagues, Aunt Martha (she wants to know more than avocado seeds in a glass of water), cousin Phil, and some innocent bystanders. You need to drag, force, bribe, and cajole them in to coming to a meeting and see for themselves. I am sure they will want more once they get here.

As part of the process we need more area meetings. Area meetings are our first and foremost outreach program. And the area meetings are not big productions and they are well within the grasp of anyone here who can assemble a few friends and plan a day of it. They can be informative, lively, fun, and all together enlightening. I know because I did one of the first ones some 17 years ago and I got 150 people to show up. You can do that too!

This year marks my 30th anniversary as a member of the IPPS. I am getting to be an "old dog" now, not as old as Darrel Apps but, just the same, an old dog. We need some new pups amongst us, who can step up here and lead the pack. I remember when I first joined and I had serious doubts as to what I could bring to this august body. What did I, a mere youngster of 23 years old, fresh out of school have anything to contribute in comparison to the likes of Ralph Shugert, Hudson Hartmann, Case Hoogendorn, or Bruce Briggs, or Micheal Dirr. Well, the answer is, we all work on very small niches from time to time and mine was plants of the Rocky Mountains, something that was not well covered back then when I joined. And that is my message to the young people here, you too have small niches that interest you, curious plants be it native or otherwise that are underneath the radar screen. We all need you to bring those things to our attention and by doing so you become part of the "Seek and Share Process."

I hope that I am still around for the next 30 years and to see the 90th anniversary, Darrel Apps tells me he plans to be here too, as does Harlan Hamernik. And when that happens, I will want to stagger up to this podium and say, "I knew you could do it."

We have work to do, but we can certainly "Git 'er done!"

Thank you.