

Yankee Nursery Online: Your Future on the Web

Mark H. Brand

Department of Plant Science, University of Connecticut, Storrs, Connecticut 06269

Over the last 10 to 15 years, colleges of agriculture in New England and other parts of the U.S. have experienced a significant reduction in their resources available and committed to landscape horticulture and nursery crops. At the same time, there has been a dramatic increase in the need for high quality teaching and learning in these areas to meet the demand for well trained graduates generated by the tremendous and continued growth in the ornamental plant industries. One of the most essential skills needed by individuals entering the landscape and nursery industries is a solid and broad knowledge of landscape plant materials.

Students, educators, and landscape professionals need visual materials to help learn, teach, and sell plants. Adequate and cost-effective visual materials do not exist in the form of books or CD-ROM programs. Existing media lacks sufficient breadth and depth to serve the needs of baccalaureate degree teaching and learning. Outdoor campus plant walk laboratories are commonly used at all universities, but are limited by the plant specimens present, weather conditions and the inability to see the many seasonal plant features at one point in time. A multimedia database is being developed on the World Wide Web (WWW) (<http://www.canr.uconn.edu/plsci/mbrand>) which will contain descriptive text, thousands of photographs of over 1000 landscape trees, shrubs, and vines used in U.S.D.A. Zone 6 or colder, as well as a sound library of pronunciations. This database will provide users with a single body of information on plant species, cultivars and varieties, and their characteristics, the breadth and depth of which is not available elsewhere. It will include information and pictures of habitat, habit and form, summer foliage, autumn foliage, flowers, fruit, bark, culture, landscape uses, liabilities, identification features, propagation, and varieties and cultivars.

In conjunction with the plant material database, "Virtual Campus Plant Walks" are being developed for all of the New England Land Grant University campuses, and one private college campus, which will enable undergraduate and associate degree students to repeat on-campus plant walks from their dormitory room or from any capable computer connected to the WWW. "Virtual Campus Plant Walks" will be specific to each laboratory walk, and each campus, and will be comprised of a series of image-mapped photographs of each stop along the route taken by the instructor. Students using the program will be able to move their mouse cursor over an image-mapped photograph and click on the plant covered during the walk, as indicated by the cursor changing to a hand with a pointing finger. By clicking on the image-mapped plant, students will then seamlessly access the plant material database and its textual, visual, and audio information on all plant characteristics, rather than just those characteristics visible during an outdoor campus plant walk laboratory. The plant material database will also serve as a free reference and instructional aid for the nursery and landscape industry, agricultural consultants, extension personnel, landscape architects, and the gardening public.

In addition to the plant material sections, Yankee Nursery Online also has a section on nursery and landscape extension personnel. For each employee with

ornamental horticulture extension responsibilities, information is provided that tells the web visitor the expertise of each person, where they are located and how to reach them for assistance. A photograph is also provided of each person so growers and landscapers can recognize the people they have contacted.

Horticultural fact sheets are available at the web site in Adobe Acrobat PDF file format and other Extension publications will also be added. The PDF file format allows the web site user to view and print the fact sheets exactly as they are in the hardcopy versions by using free Acrobat Reader software and any internet-capable computer with a laser printer. Similarly, back issues of *Yankee Nursery Quarterly*, a regional Extension Nursery publication produced by the University of Connecticut, are available in PDF file format.

Effect of Division Size on Direct-potted Ornamental Grasses

Mark H. Brand

Department of Plant Science, University of Connecticut, Storrs, Connecticut 06269

INTRODUCTION

In many nursery operations, ornamental grasses are potted in May using established plugs. These plugs are started in October/November (cool season grasses) or in February (warm season grasses) from very small divisions made from the previous year's container crop. Although this system makes efficient use of a small number of stock plants to yield a large quantity of small divisions, it adds an extra step to the production process. This extra step has the potential to add cost to the process in the form of additional labor-hours, additional skills needed by laborers, and fuel to at least minimally heat greenhouses. Typical production methods also require that a grower is set up to efficiently deal with a plug production system that uses a different set of pots, potting medium, materials handling equipment, and so on, than are used for 1- and 2-gal production.

Of course, when stock plants are limited in number, such as for new cultivars and species or for slow-to-increase selections, this method makes the most sense, allowing one to gain the greatest number of plants from a minimal amount of stock materials. However, for more common plant material and those that increase rapidly, we don't have to be as concerned about conserving plant material and dividing the plants down to the smallest propagule that is possible. In these cases, a method where a larger division is potted directly into the container size that the plant will be marketed in may be another approach worth considering. The advantage of this type of system is the elimination of the entire plug production step, which, as was discussed earlier, can be resource intensive.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A study was conducted during the 1995 growing season to look at the performance of two division sizes of several common ornamental grasses when used in a direct potting system that eliminates the plug production step. The research was con-