
President's Message[®]

M. Nevin Smith

Suncrest Nurseries, Inc., 400 Casserly Road, Watsonville, California 95076

Email: mnevin@suncrestnurseries.com

INTRODUCTION

I'd like first to welcome you all to this year's annual conference of the International Plant Propagators' Society, Western Region. We owe a hearty "thanks" to Jim Conner and his hard-working committee members for putting together a fine program of lectures and tours for you, with plenty of fun in sunny San Diego around the edges.

IPPS HISTORY AND CREED

This is our fiftieth anniversary as a society, and you'll probably hear frequent references to a rich history of "Seek and Share." I'd like to bring that motto, as I understand it, into sharper focus and to talk about practical, attainable ways we might carry it forward.

It may help for you to know that the Society was born partly out of frustration with a proprietary spirit towards information on commercial horticulture. Every new success represented a "secret," to be jealously guarded from all comers. Hoarding of information resulted in a huge duplication of effort and it held back the progress of an entire industry.

The good folks who founded IPPS set out to change all that. The "Seek" in the motto they adopted represents an active quest for better ways to do things, for solutions to nagging problems, and for new plants and new technologies. The "Share" represents an active commitment to use the information we have gleaned, sometimes by painful experience, to help other members to solve common problems with plant propagation and production. If we take that commitment seriously, all of us benefit in very tangible ways, and we keep the general state of horticultural knowledge moving forward.

SO HOW DO WE DO IT?

Role of the Society. The IPPS provides a formal structure — an umbrella, if you will — to encourage the sharing of information and promotion of education, at several levels. However, as you'll find very quickly if you're new here, the real action comes from your own individual participation.

We begin with the annual conferences. Each year's organizer strives to provide us with speakers who are actively working on interesting and useful topics in horticulture, topics of both general and practical interest to members in all of our geographical areas and branches of horticulture. The tours we conduct as part of these same meetings, with the generous cooperation of our host nurseries and other institutions, provide an opportunity to see creative horticulture in action.

Personal Contacts. However, you'll often find that equal benefits flow simply from getting active minds together — whether on our tours, in informal chats between sessions, or away at local dives. Often, long-term contacts and friendships are formed. Old-timers in IPPS will tell you that these contacts and the ideas they generated, far beyond answering specific practical questions, have helped guide their entire careers.

The part we haven't exploited quite so well is that of opportunities to maintain regular contact between the annual meetings. We all get mired in the details of our daily work, we file away those business cards and notes so carefully made of names and addresses, and we let it all go until the next September or October rolls around.

What We Can Do. Without venturing too far out into wild-eyed fantasies, there really are things we can do, both jointly and individually, to enhance this contact and maintain the flow of interesting and useful information. One that already has a long though fairly erratic history in Western Region is our Area Meetings. These are generally inexpensive one-day affairs, often with carpool tours of local nurseries, colleges, and public gardens, and sometimes forums or speakers on a particular theme. They're a great way to rekindle enthusiasm among members in the area, as well as to bring in local students and other "new blood." Most recently, Jill Cross in Washington and Sarah Celestian in Arizona have organized meetings like these with great success. Carrying on that tradition, I'd like to cordially welcome you all to a meeting next spring on the Central California coast, devoted particularly to propagation and production of California native plants, and perhaps to those of other Mediterranean-climate regions. We'll get out an email blast as our plans take shape. But here's the point. You can volunteer to get one of these events together in your own area. By all means use your area representative on the Executive Committee to provide a little guidance and to assist you in finding others to help with the nitty details. But by all means, give it a try!

For communication on the fly, Dave Burger and Corey Barnes have been working to develop an online forum as part of the Western Region website. Some disappointments have led them to other, somewhat more trendy and less expensive possibilities, the latest of which are Google Groups and Google Wave. Dave has set up a site for testing on Google Groups, and you can access it at: <www.googlegroups.com/ippswr>. If you'll use it, a conversational site would be well suited to throwing out questions as they arise and getting a quick response. And there lies the crux of the matter: Will you use it?

Meanwhile, with email now an accustomed part of daily life, we might fairly readily form interest subgroups of members — basically mailing lists, either moderated or otherwise — for sending messages back and forth on specific problems and solutions. Would *you* be interested in getting such a group together? Would you help host it?

As for some of the more recent rages in communications — things like blogs, Facebook, and even Twitter — I'll leave their possibilities to your imagination. I would expect these to find more appeal among our younger, tech-savvy, and social members.

CONCLUSION

If any of this strikes your fancy or if you think you have an even better idea, don't wait for it to be implemented from on high. Talk to your IPPS friends, bring your ideas to one of us on the Executive Committee (After all, it's our job to listen!) and let's see if we can make it happen. Better yet, make it known that you're willing to serve on a committee, like the Publicity and Promotion Committee, whose outgoing chairman, Corey Barnes, helped us organize the new website. Or a site committee — which organizes tours and other events for the annual conferences — when a conference is about to come your way. Your participation has always been the very core of IPPS and it will be so for as long as we exist as a society.

Thank you.