

Teacher Program Tour Examines Specimen Trees, Greenhouse Flowers

ANDY ANDREWS

**Lancaster Farming Staff
WOMELSDORF (Berks Co.)**

— Upscale home buyers and estate managers share some things in common when selecting their landscaping, according to a certified landscape architect.

"They want the tree *now*," said Sheldon DuBrow of DuBrow's Nurseries, Inc., Livingston, N.J. "They don't want to wait."

DuBrow has learned to convert the customer's wishes into a thriving business by specializing in select "specimen" trees that provide "instant landscaping" — mature trees on carefully planned and constructed landscape designs.

DuBrow provided a tour of his tree farm in Womelsdorf Tuesday afternoon to about 30 grade and high school educators and representatives as part of a Berks County Ag In the Classroom Teacher Seminar. The seminar participants, later in the day, also toured Layser's Flowers in Myerstown.

The DuBrow farm, comprising 100 acres in Marion Township, grows and harvests trees and shrubs for its landscape, garden center, and maintenance divisions. The corporation makes its home in Livingston, N.J., a site comprising about 37 acres located about 125 miles from Womelsdorf.

About 60 acres in Womelsdorf are devoted to specimen shade and flowering trees for the landscape design business. In addition to the nursery division, there are others, including a grounds management division and an upscale garden center, "a boutique center," said DuBrow. The 40-year-old company employs 250.

DuBrow said he is one of two certified landscape architects in the landscape design and build division that designs and installs a

total landscape package.

DuBrow demonstrated that he can grow, package, and transport specimen trees (trees that are large and carefully pruned for design specifications) to eight-inch caliper (the diameter of the tree's trunk). Specimen trees, he said, are more mature trees, "larger than what you would see in any landscape."

"We believe a specimen tree is a key element in the landscape design," said DuBrow. "A specimen tree makes its mark in the landscape."

DuBrow demonstrated the use of a caliper gauge on a seven-inch caliper pin oak, one of the feature trees on the actual farm near a house built in 1850 and restored in 1989, shortly after DuBrow located the nursery in Womelsdorf.

Consumers seek out the specimen trees — which certainly have a huge price tag.

DuBrow noted that some will go for the "trophy" trees, the weeping beech or the copper beech, as an example, with high caliper. The cost? About \$20,000-\$30,000 per tree, he noted.

The DuBrows built and landscaped the farm pond. The site of the nursery was once a dairy farm.

The nursery at Womelsdorf also plants "liners," small trees that have a one-inch caliper.

"This farm has some of the best soil," said DuBrow. "Berks County soils offer some incredible stuff. There is incredible growth to the trees in this soil."

DuBrow noted he was careful in site selection for soil fertility, high moisture availability, soil that drains well, and would not need irrigation after the first year of tree growth.

DuBrow noted that one landscape architect insisted that the soil could not maintain the incredible



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growth. Yet DuBrow pointed to a crabapple that maintained one inch caliper of growth per year.

Some of the Womelsdorf land has high slopes, from 2-5 percent, with a 50-foot differential. But trees of any caliper do well.

The trees are obtained from nurseries in Portland, Ore. and shipped during the winter. They are kept in cold storage on the farm, at 40-45 degree temperatures, until the landscape business can go into the fields in March (if

workable). The business attempts to "get the trees out and planted, the sooner the better," he said.

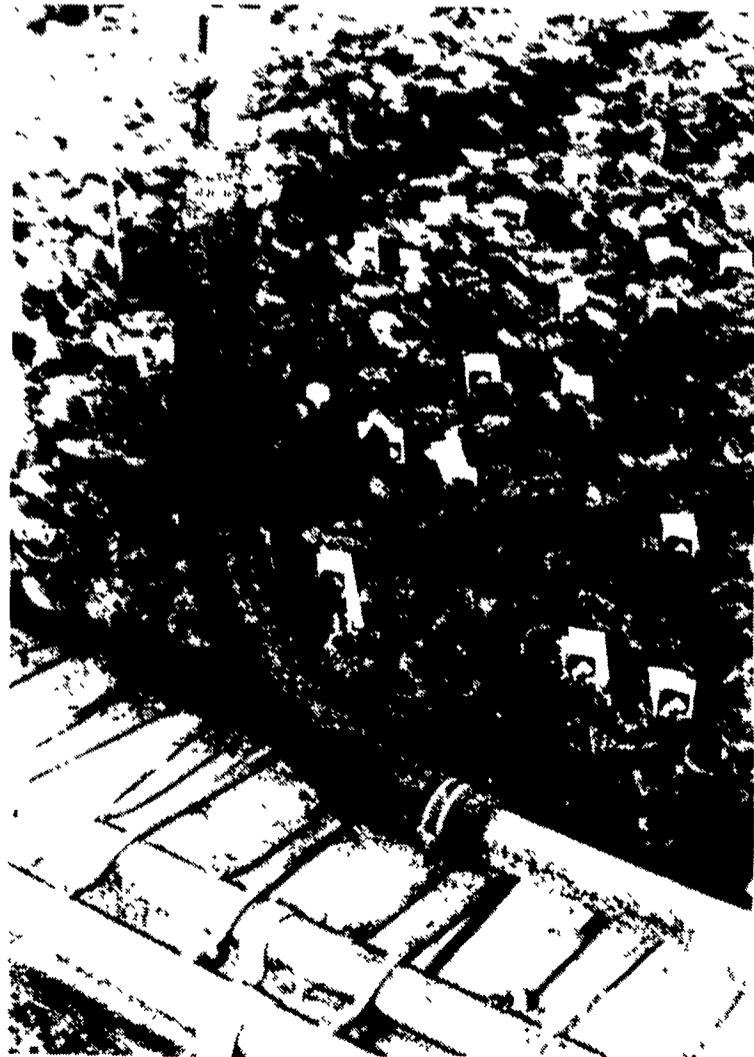
DuBrow provided a tour of the farm. He also demonstrated the equipment, including a new, \$70,000, 135-horsepower tractor; a three-shank subsoiler; and a tree weeder. He also demonstrated a four-unit hydraulic tree spade, which can dig and uproot a tree to 4-inch caliper that can burrow to about 2½ to 3 feet down, according to Larry Knoll, farm manager.

Once the tree is dug, it is placed in a specially designed wire basket that can hold a few hundred pounds of soil with a burlap bag. The rungs at the end of the wire cage are used to tie the tree down after planting.

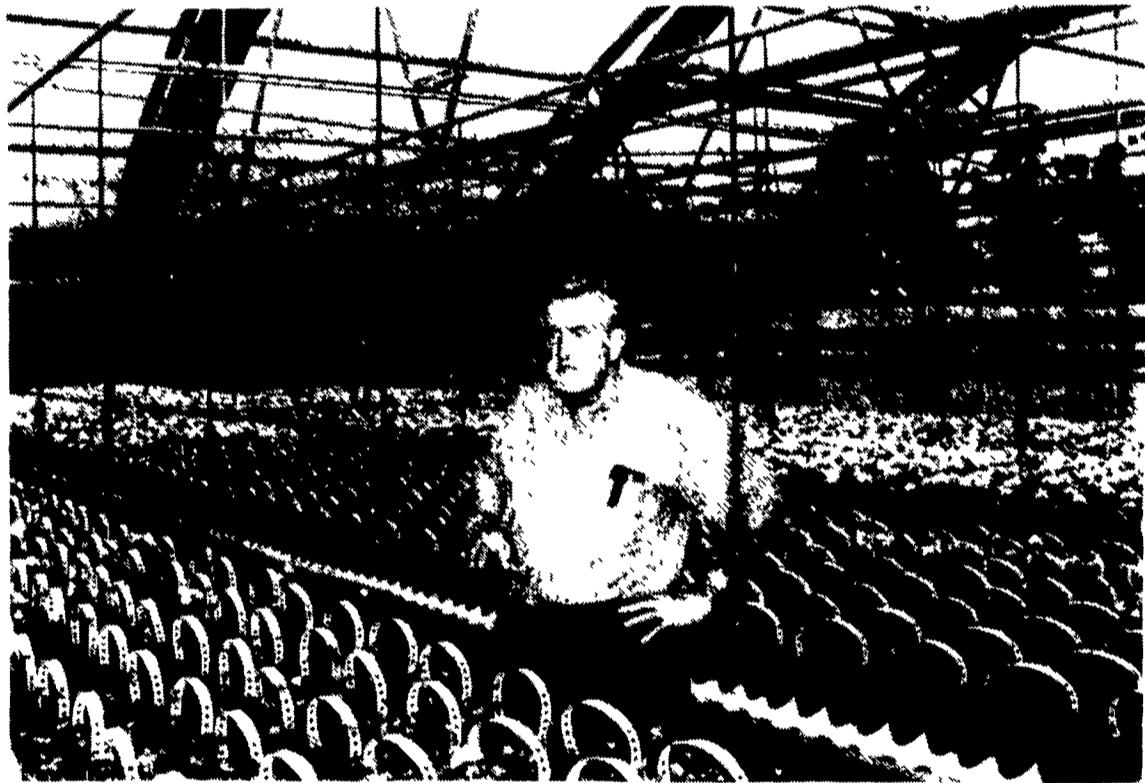
DuBrow also showed various low-growing lilacs, 4-5 foot hollies, and other types of shruberies and trees.

A new development in the industry has been the use of "bio-

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Some of the plants are grown through a special thermal root zone watering system, which moves hot water through rubber coils underneath the pot. Temperature of the root zone is maintained at about 72 degrees to help the poinsettias root in the summer. About a half acre of the root zone watering system is used during the winter, Layser noted.



The Laysers make "maximum use of greenhouse space," noted Donald Layser. Bedding plants and geraniums make up their number one seller. Hanging baskets, in abundance throughout the operation, make up only about 12 percent of total sales.



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