

Future Of Nursery Industry

(Continued from Page E3)

mainly Oregon, then grow them on a larger stock.

"Many larger nurseries in Ohio export 70 percent of what they grow in nursery stock. Ohio is well positioned geographically to increase its market. It's a shipping hub," said Mathers.

Ohio growers import approximately \$14 million worth of tree liners from the West annually at an average cost of \$15 per liner. It is estimated that Oregon liner sales into Ohio and surrounding states total \$50 million a year.

"Ohio growers can capture that \$50 million market, and that's just a conservative estimate, and they can do it with retractable roof greenhouses," said Mathers.

She said the gold mine with using retractable roof greenhouses in Ohio tree liner production is that a grower can extend the growing season. Oregon's growing season is 225 days, while Ohio's is only 156 days. "All we are looking to make up is 75 days," said Mathers. "Using retractable roof greenhouses, we can start with growth in March rather than waiting until June. There's the 75 days made up for right there."

Mathers said with retractable roof greenhouses, seedlings can be grown into whips under full cover through fall, winter, and early spring and, when conditions become more favorable, retract the roofs and/or walls and turn the nursery stock into a commercial production site without ever having to move the trees.

Such convenience, said Mathers, decreases labor and equipment costs. The greenhouses are also affordable to build, costing only \$1 a foot for flat-roof houses and \$3 foot for peaked-roof houses. "When the average price of a liner is going for \$15, it makes economical sense to build a retractable roof greenhouse," said Mathers. "There is a considerable profit to be made here and the thing that many growers don't realize is that it's doable."

One argument behind the use of retractable roof greenhouses in Ohio is whether or not they'll stand up to the state's wintry conditions. "Whether the roofs will stand up to snow and ice is something we won't know until we try it. During winter I'd like to think that we'd just retract the roof and let the snow cover the stock, providing insulation during winter — much like you would find in a natural environment," said Mathers.

The researchers are working with red oak, red maple, yellow wood, and magnolia seedlings and are hoping to have their first whips by this spring.

The wholesale nursery industry in Ohio is worth about \$580 million. The landscape, garden center, and nursery sectors combined are worth approximately \$2.5 billion annually. Nursery production is estimated to be the fourth largest agricultural industry in Ohio, behind corn, soybeans, and dairy.

'Overthinning' Not A Word

(Continued from Page E4)

Best. "You have to do it yourself and keep real good data, observe them. It will be a help — not a cure."

At the conference, Dr. Kathryn Taylor, Department of Horticulture, University of Georgia, spoke about the work on new and existing peach varieties in the state.

Georgia peach production, Taylor noted, peaked in the 1920s, then declined through the next six decades. The lowest point came in the 1990s, especially with the terrible freeze in 1996. "That had a tremendous impact on the survivability of growers," said Taylor.

Consolidations have left the industry in the hands of seven

growers/packers, representing 96 percent of the state's peach tree acreage.

Since 1999, there has been some growth in the state's peach industry. No major frosts have occurred, said Taylor. Some of the issues growers have had to face include the Guest Worker and H2-A Program with migrant workers, adopting management expert systems, and looking at improved varieties.

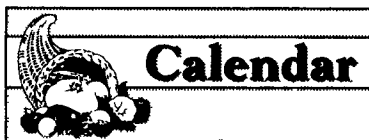
The peach industry in Georgia is centered in the town of Fort Valley in Peach County, Georgia. Georgia has a very complex plum pox virus testing program and monitors thousands of samples yearly.

Research is looking at peaches for wholesale measur-

ing 2.5-2.75 inches in width, with a good balance of acids and sugars, proper coloring, high soluble solids (14 percent), improved disease resistance, and other factors. Varieties include Gulfprince, Gulfking, Gulfcrest, Fireprince, Flameprince, and others.

The Georgia Peach Council is located at P.O. Box 1031, Fort Valley, GA 31030. Taylor noted the work of the council in improving the viability of peach growing for individual growers and marketers in the state.

This year, the state is planting another 1,500 acres, which equates to about 165,000 trees using new orchard management systems and technologies.



Calendar

(Continued from Page E5)

Agricultural Research and Development Center's Muck Crop Branch, Celeryville, Ohio, 10 a.m.-noon, (419) 935-1201.

Tuesday, July 8

American Society For Enology and Viticulture Wine Conference, Radisson Hotel, Corning, N.Y., thru July 11, (765) 494-6704.

Wednesday, July 9

Penn State Agronomy Industry Field Day, Landisville Research Center, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m., (717) 270-4391.

Friday, July 11

American Society For Enology and Viticulture Eastern Section Annual Meeting, Raddison Hotel, Corning, N.Y., thru July 13.

Saturday, July 12

Ohio Florists' Association Short Course, Columbus, Ohio, thru July 16, (614) 487-1117.

Thursday, July 17

Vineyard Tech Group Meeting, Lancaster Farm and Home Center, 2 p.m.-5 p.m., (717) 394-6851.

Friday, July 25

Christmas Tree Growers Association of New York Summer Convention, Chip Ellms Christmas Tree Farm, Ralston Spa, N.Y., (315) 754-8132.

Tuesday, July 29

Penn Allied Nursery Trade Show, Fort Washington Expo Center, Fort Washington, thru July 31, (717) 238-1673.

Saturday, August 2

Small Fruit Production Workshop, Cornell Orchards, Ithaca, N.Y., (607) 687-4020.

Thursday, August 7

Pennsylvania Christmas Tree Growers Association Summer Conference, Ramada Inn, State College, thru Aug. 9, (800) 547-2842.

Saturday, August 16

National Agricultural Plastics Congress, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Grand Rapids, Mich., thru Aug. 19

Tuesday, August 19

Ag Progress Days, Rockspring, thru Aug. 21.

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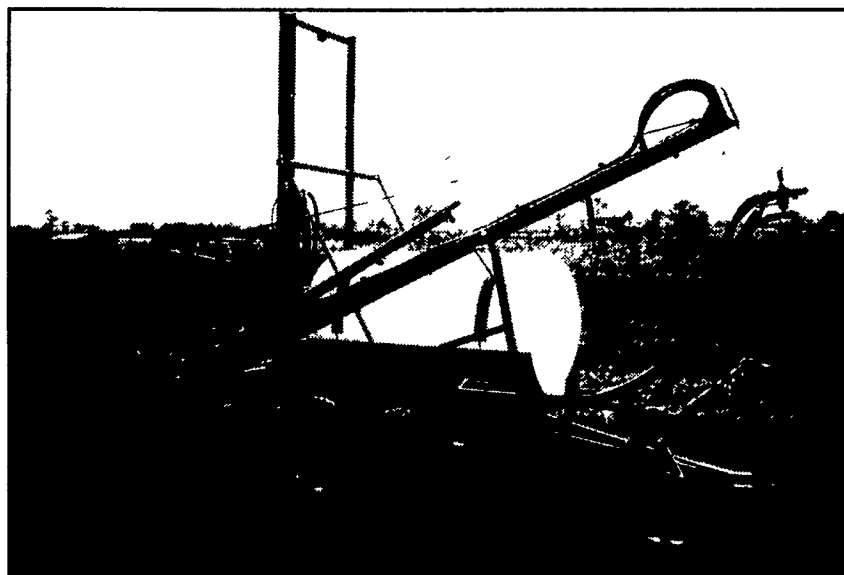
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