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Hello, everybody! Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Todd Ryan, and I will be your KNLA president for the next two years. I’m looking forward to working with the board and our members to make KNLA the best it can be.

Larry Sanders (James Sanders Nursery) is rotating off the board after finishing his term as past president. Larry has just completed six years on the KNLA executive committee, after many years as a board member. Thanks, Larry, for all your years of volunteer service. After many years of hard work, Mike Dreisbach (Allied Nursery) might get the chance to loaf a little as our current past president. Thanks, Mike, for all the dedicated service that you have given KNLA and, especially, for teaching me so much about how we function.

I’ve learned enough already to know that our organization cannot function without committed board members, so I hate to lose Brick Green (Green’s Silo House Nursery), who is going off the board after more years than I can count. Thankfully, Pat Carey (Riverfarm Nursery) and Tom Weeks (Wilson Nurseries) have agreed to stick it out for another three years. I would also like to welcome two new directors — Johnnie Stockdale (Stockdale Tree Farm) and Steve Sauter (Lawnco, Inc.). Their profiles will be highlighted in the Summer issue of Nursery Views.

Matt Gardiner (Boone Gardiner Garden Center), our new vice president, will inherit the illustrious title of “director of move-in” for the Mid-States Horticultural Expo. At MHSE two years ago, when Mike was showing me the ropes for move in and move out, I thought, “I am going to have a kinder, gentler move in.” Well, after being cussed out in a foreign language this year, kind and gentle were out the window. I’m happy to be turning that job over. Good luck, Matt. I’m sure I would have had more than one cussing if not for the all the help from Matt, Rodney Byersdoerfer (Premium Horticultural Supply Co.), Ben Cecil (Sunny Ray’s Nursery), Don Blocker (McHutchison, LLC), Tom Weeks (Wilson Nurseries, Inc.) and the old pro Dr. Bob McNiel (Highland Moor). Thanks, everybody — you all actually made it fun!

This past January, the KNLA, KGA, KAA and the UK Cooperative Extension Service hosted the Kentucky Landscape Industries Winter Conference, with Donna Michael serving as chair. Donna and her committee’s outstanding program led to exceptional conference attendance, the highest ever for KLI! Thanks, Donna, for putting together such a great program. The KLI Conference would not have happened without sponsors, so a big thank you to: Platinum & Keynote Speaker Sponsor, Kentucky Dept. of Agriculture, and our Gold Sponsors, Bernheim Arboretum & Research Forest and Farm Credit Services.

Thanks also to the UK Cooperative Extension Service for providing moderators — Jamie Dockery, Dave Koester, Andrea Lee, Dennis Morgeson and DJ Scully — and thanks to the following registration desk volunteers: Debbie Barnes (Louis’ Flower Power Shops), Candace Harker, Dino Kent (Kentucky Arborists’ Assn.), Amy Poston and Sarah Stolz. Last, but not least, I would like to thank Dr. Win Dunwell (UK Research & Education Center) for once again serving as our Kentucky Certified Nurseryman chair, BJ Brymer for assisting Dr. Dunwell and Mike Ray (Carl Ray Nursery) for assisting with grading.

Our next KNLA event will be our 10th Annual Summer Outing on Wednesday, September 2. Pat Carey will once again chair the event, and it will be at my place this year, Valley Hill Nurseries in Springfield. Come by to chat with old friends, visit with vendors, enjoy the barbecue luncheon and meet our new board members.

One last reminder: the PLANET CLT-E Exam will be held on Thursday, September 24, 2009, at Eastern Kentucky University. If you are interested on serving on the committee or as a judge or volunteer, or if you would like sponsorship information, please call the KNLA office at (502) 695-0106.

Wishing you the best spring season,

Todd Ryan
KNLA President, 2009–2010
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Congratulations to Paul Cappiello

Paul Cappiello, director of horticulture at Yew Dell Gardens in Crestwood, KY, has been named a Fellow of the Eastern Region of the International Plant Propagators’ Society (IPPS). Election as a Fellow recognizes outstanding contributions to the Society and to the field of plant propagation through research, teaching, extension or leadership in the green industry.

Cappiello was recently elected as the executive director of the IPPS Eastern Region Foundation, an organization dedicated to supporting plant production research and scholarships. He has received numerous awards from the Garden Club of America, National Garden Clubs and the American Society for Horticulture Science.
HIGHLIGHTS from the
KNLA Annual Business Meeting,
January 13, 2009, Louisville, Kentucky

2009 KNLA Officers, Directors and Past Presidents

Special Award Honorees

Dr. Win Dunwell
(UK Research & Education Center)

Donna Michael
(Jefferson County Extension Service)

Outgoing Officers/Directors

Larry Sanders, Past President with Mike Dreisbach

Brick Green, Director with Mike Dreisbach

Mike Dreisbach, President with Todd Ryan, new President (Mike remains on the board as Past President)

Tom Weeks, Director with Mike Dreisbach

Mike Ray (Carl Ray Landscape Nursery)

KNLA Honorary Hall of Fame Inductees
(Shown with KNLA’s 2008 President Mike Dreisbach)

David and Mary Lou Smallwood Above, accepting the award, are the Smallwood’s sons, Ross and Michael. (Ken Mulch, Inc.)

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Chinese buttonbush is a little-known member of the *Rubiaceae*, the family of the North American native buttonbush, *Cephalanthus occidentalis*. Like its cousin, _Adina_ offers bombproof performance and outstanding, durable garden features.

This plant’s habit is endlessly malleable — it will typically grow to about 6’ tall and a bit more in width, but it can be cut, whacked, sheared and abused in just about any way. It is perfectly happy being heavily pruned or growing in a more relaxed and natural state.

Opposite leaves reminiscent of _Abelia x grandiflora_ offer fine texture, deep-green color and outstanding gloss. Although fall foliage color is all but absent, leaf quality remains excellent throughout the growing season.

Aside from excellent foliage, _Adina_ is grown for its unusual, Sputnik-like flowers up to about 1" in diameter. Exserted stigmas that almost double the diameter of the entire structure give a spiny appearance to the perfectly spherical, white inflorescences. Their mildly sweet fragrance adds to the summer garden.

_Adina_ is quite flexible with cultural requirements. While native to woodland edges, the species is perfectly happy in everything from hot full sun to moist, partly shaded sites. It is highly pH adaptable; its cuttings root like weeds; and container culture is a snap.

In the landscape, Chinese buttonbush is useful as a single shrub or in large masses. Its deep green foliage provides an excellent backdrop for flashier performers and perennial borders, and because it holds its leaves uncharacteristically late in the fall, it is a great selection for screen planting. The moderately set flowers offer a delicate and interesting feature after the peak of spring flowering and continuing sporadically through the summer.

With the tremendous variety that comes from seed-grown populations of _Adina_, surely there is room for selection of superior clones. Larger flowers, smaller plant stature and flower color variants are all likely out there — we just need to look a little more carefully. Maybe then, _Adina rubella_ will be able to emerge from the background shadows and occupy a starring role in the garden.
Sharpen Your Nursery Business Strategies for 2009

By Timothy Woods, Ph.D., Extension Professor, Dept. of Agricultural Economics, University of Kentucky

Housing starts are down sharply from just a year ago, and the outlook for 2009 calls for a continued slowdown. Consumer confidence is way down, stalling any spending on luxury goods or major property-improvement projects. Market prices for nursery products are low, and price volatility is high, making prospects for profitable planning very difficult. Businesses throughout the nursery and landscaping sector are suffering with slow pull from depressed retail markets in garden centers and big-box home-improvement stores. There is no shortage on negative business signals and plenty of opportunity for trouble. These are times for savvy, skilled business professionals.

So how does a nursery business navigate through these choppy waters? I would like to suggest a few basic business principles for times such as these that should apply to any small business.

Cost-management strategies
Knowing your costs is a critical starting point when you’re dealing with potentially tighter margins. This is not always straightforward in the nursery business. Many assets are purchased for use over several years. You need to factor in these costs while you are pricing, but it is also true that not all costs are the same. It may be necessary in some tough circumstances to look for opportunities to spread your costs over more production, even if you’re not making much margin.

This may be a time to take a hard look at the equipment and buildings you own and evaluate these assets for their contribution to your business. Can some equipment be leased, shared or outsourced? Others may be especially looking for opportunities to share equipment or facilities in an effort to manage their own costs.

In the rare case where you have cash to invest in your business, you may be on the lookout for used equipment coming onto the market rather than purchasing new. But don’t purchase something coming available just because it’s cheap. Ask if you really need it.

Cash-management strategies
Cash is king in a down economy. It’s critical to plan for your cash needs for your labor, inputs and short-term capital payments. Be careful about tying up cash in inventories. Look for opportunities to structure payments from your customers with more upfront cash. Many small businesses offer discounts for early payment on receivables.

Nurseries typically incur a substantial surge in receivables in the spring and can look healthy on paper but find themselves exposed on cash. The books are typically long on inventories and short on cash during the early summer months. The quick ratio — for those with a little accounting knowledge — is the best financial ratio to evaluate liquidity for an inventory-intensive business. This measures your current assets (cash and receivables, not including inventory) against your current liabilities. Keep this ratio as close to 1.0 or above as possible.

Other firms buying from nurseries are facing similar economic challenges. Evaluate the credit worthiness of your customers carefully, especially if they are new. Expect to see slower payment and greater non-payment. It’s happening everywhere. Have a plan for working with your distressed accounts.

Communicate with your bank on your own operating loan or capital-financing needs. You both want to avoid surprises. Be sure you have a little extra flexibility to access cash if you need it. It takes a little extra time to put together the projected monthly cash flow activity, but well worth the effort in these times. Have a cash-management contingency plan just in case your usual sales projections don’t play out in 2009.

Debt-management strategies
Monitor your debt carefully. More than one small business has jumped on a major capital purchase, bought out another business, leveraged to grab up some sweet deal and then found itself stuck when its business hit a tough patch. Don’t be surprised to see banks offering attractive rates to take on more debt as new stimulus programs come available. Be careful. Low interest rates alone are no reason to take on more debt. It’s not typically the interest expense that sinks an over-leveraged business — it’s the capital payment. Keep solvent.

There is a lot more downside risk in this current economy. Keep your long-range business plan and growth in mind, but grow carefully.

Short-term management with long-term view
Financial management will be critical for nurseries in 2009. But let me also encourage you to keep your short-term decisions in context with what you want your business to become. Opportunities for significant growth will return. New products and service opportunities will emerge. Marketing support, knowledgeable service and quality will still be in high demand in 2009 and beyond, even as nursery customers are more price sensitive in the short run. Look for opportunities to build value into your business so that you can emerge as a preferred supplier long into the future.

Dr. Woods has worked with the horticulture industries in Kentucky for 14 years. He teaches agribusiness management and horticulture marketing at the University of Kentucky and devotes a significant amount of his time working with grower groups to improve their businesses.
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