

FNGLA Endowed Research Fund Report

Statewide Expansion of South Florida BMP Effort

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Introduction

The Clean Water Act was enacted in 1972 to protect surface waters such as rivers, streams, canals, and wetlands from point and non-point discharge of pollutants. This Act has prompted state environmental agencies, e.g., Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), to establish Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for nutrients that may impact waters of the state. In a few years, when FDEP has completed the process of determining TMDLs, agriculture operations including nurseries will be accountable for their nutrient discharge offsite. Thus, water quality issues and in particular surface water quality issues are rapidly coming to the forefront of public attention and will impact nursery operations.

To address the elevated phosphorus concentrations in south Florida canals, members of the FNGLA and other plant producers drafted a document titled *Florida Container Nursery BMP Guide* (<http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu>). Educational workshops were conducted in south Florida to help nursery operators implement the BMPs and demonstrations of BMPs were initiated.

A bmp document for container plant production was developed for south Florida because water quality was being scrutinized, but water quality issues will likely erupt statewide in the future, particularly as urbanization absorbs agricultural land and challenges agriculture's water use and impact on water quality. BMPs will be voluntary and provide the foundation for addressing water quality complaints encountered by nursery personnel statewide and assure that nurseries are in compliance with water quality standards of the state.

Objective and Methods

The objective of the proposed work was to expand the south Florida BMP effort to a statewide effort for the purpose of achieving adoption of BMPs by nursery operators. Educational programs and demonstrations were major components of the south Florida effort so this approach was expanded statewide. The following workshops or seminars were conducted to help nursery operators implement the information in the BMP document and prepare them for conducting assessments of their nurseries.

12/14/05 Nursery BMP Workshop, Apopka

1/12/06 Nursery BMP Workshop, Seffner

1/26/06 Nursery BMP Workshop, Quincy

3/14/06 Nursery BMP Workshop, Gainesville

4/4/06 Nursery BMP Workshop, Bartow

4/13/06 Nursery BMP Workshop, Deland

4/18/06 Nursery BMP Seminar, Webster

5/31/06 Nursery BMP Seminar, Homestead

In addition, a brochure about BMPs was developed and distributed in *Ornamental Outlook* magazine in January and a meeting was conducted in Gainesville in August with Water Management District personnel so they could comment on the statewide expansion of the BMP effort. Information about BMPs was also distributed at the Florida Nursery and Allied Trades Show in September.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Nursery plant production areas in the north and central-south portions of the state will be targeted for future hands-on BMP workshops. Participants will learn about BMPs and conduct a nursery site assessment as a learning objective. This will help prepare the participants for the BMP selection process at their own nursery. Additionally, BMPs will be demonstrated at nurseries statewide by UF/IFAS for the purpose of furthering adoption of cultural practices that result in minimal impacts on ground and surface waters of the state.