

# FORUM: The watchdog is barking

The following remarks are excerpted from a talk which was presented by Ray Brush of the American Association of Nurserymen before the National Plant Board.

Fundamental to analyzing how great a pest risk there may be with foliage plants is an understanding of the phenomenal growth in the foliage plant business.

From 1970 through 1975 the value of foliage plants sold in the United States has multiplied by nearly seven times. Two states account for most of the production — Florida and California. In 1970 it was estimated that 55 percent of the foliage plant sales represented Florida production and 12½ percent California production, the

remaining one-third coming from the other 48 states.

California saw the most rapid increase during this period. Let's examine the cause of this expansion. Increased production by florists, foliage producers, nurserymen, poultry growers, vegetable growers, speculators new to horticulture, and imports accounted for this growth. Reports from both California and Florida indicate that some new foliage producers, in getting started with these crops, experienced difficulty in meeting the quality level sought by retailers and consumers. Along with that difficulty could come increased pest risk.

What was and is the American Association of Nurserymen's stand on this pest risk? The AAN continues to take a strong stand to maintain Quarantine 37 to minimize the risk of further introduction of such potentially hazardous pests of agricultural crops as Japanese Beetle, White Fringe Beetle, Imported Fire Ant, European Corn Borer, Mexican Bean Beetle, Sugar Cane Root Borer, Mediterranean Fruit Fly, various viruses, etc. Some of these particular pests entered this country before the advent of Quarantine 37, others since.

The control of these pests and others continues to be a burdensome expense for nurserymen. As the Japanese Beetle moves south and westward, does the soybean, cotton, or peanut farmer care? Apparently not, for each can still market his crop even though a reduction in yield may be experienced. In contrast, the nurseryman, if his plants become infested, can only market his plant within the quarantine regulated area or not at all.

The American Association of Nurserymen believes it is the joint responsibility of the producer and the Department of Agriculture of his State or Country to assume responsibility for inspecting and certifying nursery stock to be free of hazardous pests covered by regulations within that state, other states or foreign countries to which those plants might be shipped. □

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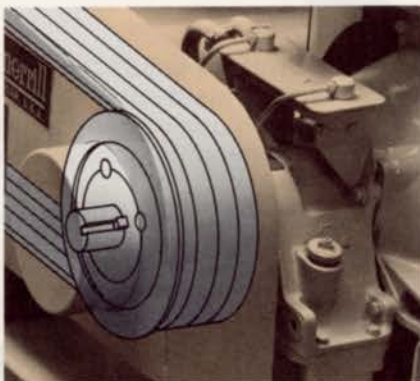


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