MSU gets $30,000 grant for tree program

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has given Michigan State University researchers a $30,000 grant for tree and forestland improvement throughout the state.

The annual renewable grant will aid MSU and the Michigan State Cooperative Tree Improvement Program (MICHCOTIP) in increasing forest productivity.

Dr. James Hanover, MSU forestry specialist and program coordinator, and researchers are trying to accomplish this through cultural and genetic improvements.

Part of the effort involves developing superior hybrids which mature more quickly than ordinary trees. To date, MSU has developed special varieties of fast growing spruce, poplar, aspen and birch. Seeds from their varieties are being used to start plantations throughout Michigan.

The researchers are also testing cultural practices of fertilization, herbicide trials, spacing techniques and nursery production of hybrid varieties. These studies are conducted on cooperators' lands throughout Michigan to determine optimum growing conditions for certain species.

MICHOTIP was formed in 1974 as a cooperative effort to work on the problems of Michigan forestlands and urban trees. Members include MSU, DNR, universities and private companies from around the state. Members pay a yearly fee to participate in, and receive research benefits done through the program.

Part of the total research program is MSU's work on accelerated-optimal-growth *Accel-O-Gro) for rapid tree production. In Accel-O-Gro, trees are grown under greenhouse conditions, and through use of light and temperature controls growth is continuous and not affected by seasonal fluctuation. Trees can then be grown to the desired size much faster than regular nursery practices. Researchers can also determine more quickly the superiority of weaknesses of species grown under these conditions.

These techniques will be applied to all aspects of Michigan forestry — including street tree improvement and commercial and state forestland operation.

For more information about MICHCOTIP from Hanover write: Department of Forestry, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824. □