Green and Growing

The North Carolina Nursery and Landscape Association just recently held their annual Green & Growin’ Show in mid-January. The event was held in Greensboro at the coliseum and it was packed! The show consists of educational opportunities for nursery growers, landscapers, Extension agents, and others along with a two-day trade show that fills the entire coliseum with as many as 1000 exhibitors. Each year a request for volunteers is sent out through the Extension system looking for agents to moderate educational sessions, help with registration, and assist with the move-in of booths. This is one of those unique opportunities as an agent where we spend the day helping, networking, and getting to know the industry from the inside out.

I spent the day in Greensboro amazed at just how big the nursery and landscape industry really is in North Carolina. From sod farms to Christmas trees, North Carolina has it all. What made me most proud, as an Extension agent was to see that Robeson County was well represented. While many people may not think of Robeson County as being a hot spot for nursery growers, business is on the rise. All three of our wholesale nursery operations were present along with the packaging company NYP Corporation that has an office here in Lumberton.

Wholesale nurseries sell primarily within the trade only to retail nurseries and landscape professionals. Some traditionally wholesale nurseries may occasionally sell retail during the peak season, or to reduce overstock. While these nurseries may not be a place you can purchase plant material from, they are most likely where your landscaper is buying plant material and it is always good to know what is in our community.

Back Road Farms in Lumber Bridge is a field-grown nursery that sells large maples, oaks, crepe myrtles, birches, and magnolias to name a few. Owner Al Averitt utilizes GPS to ensure planting and selection accuracy. They pride themselves on being one of the more technically advanced nurseries in the state.

Nursery South, LLC in Lumberton is a field and container grown nursery that deals primarily in hollies, crepe myrtles, and other large plant material. Owners and operators Lee Grantham and Bryan Freeman pride themselves on being connected to the community and good customer service.
Proctor Brother’s Nursery in Parkton produces container and field grown plant material from small foundation shrubs to large crepe myrtles. Originally established in 1920, the business was passed down through family to make Mike Proctor the third generation owner and operator.

NYP Corporation is an agriculture packaging business that serves the industrial, agricultural, and horticultural industries as well as many government agencies with burlap and other custom textile bags and packaging fabrics since 1946.

With the slump in the economy over the past few years, the green industry has taken a direct hit. When budgets get tight, the aesthetics tend to get cut first. But there are glimmers of hope on the horizon as people begin to spend more time at home with a renewed interest in their landscapes. As the green industry begins to slowly climb back to the glory days, it can only promote good things for Robeson County!

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me, Kerrie Roach, horticultural Extension agent, at North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Robeson County Center, at (910) 671-3276 or by E-mail at Kerrie_Roach@ncsu.edu or visit North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Robeson County Center’s website at Robeson.ces.ncsu.edu.