



## Ornamental Plant Identification and Usage

**COUNTY EDUCATOR:** Michael C. Masiuk, Allegheny County, Southwest Region

### PROGRAM

For a period of eight years, Extension offered a yearly plant identification and usage short course to introduce better plants for particular sites to green industry professionals i.e, landscapers, landscape architects, garden designers and garden center personnel. The course not only focused on identification of small trees and shrubs, but how to match the landscape site with cultural requirements of the plants. The in-depth, three-day course covered different plants each year.

### PROGRAM OBJECTIVES:

Professionals attending the small tree and shrub short course will:

- between the beginning and end of the short course, collectively exhibit a 50% increase in their ability to correctly identify forty trees and shrubs that have superior landscape performance in western Pennsylvania.
- at the end of the short course, indicate the knowledge gained at the seminars will improve their job performance.
- several years later, indicate the knowledge will have directly improved the quantity or quality of their business operations.

### EVALUATION STRATEGY

The strategy had three parts, each focusing on one of the objectives as well as other goals.

The first (see below) measured participants' ability to correctly identify fifteen different shrubs and ten different trees both before and after the course. On the morning of the first day, the agent distributed a pre test requiring observation and correct identification of live plant specimens covered in the class. The tests were collected and graded. At the end of the short course, participants were given the same plant specimens to identify. The post-tests, graded immediately, formed the basis of awarding plants to the three participants showing the greatest increase in their test scores. The awards were offered as an incentive and as a way to overcome any test taking apprehension. A quiz such as this one, calling for total recollection, is considered one of the most valid indicators of knowledge gain and the results are often referred to as hard data.

The second part of the strategy (see below) provided further evaluation of the three woody plant material short courses in order to evaluate publicity efforts, solicit ideas for future seminars, and provide impact data. The agent distributed the survey at the end of the course.

The third part of the strategy (see below), a mail survey, was sent to everyone attending the plant material courses from previous years. This survey measured the type of effect the information may have had on the participants' businesses.

The data from the three part evaluation strategy demonstrated impact in the form of knowledge gained and perception of whether that knowledge contributed to participants' job performance and business operations. The data was used in annual reports and promotion dossier. Other information collected improved publicity efforts and provided ideas for future short courses.

KNOWLEDGE  
QUESTION

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## DATA COLLECTION METHOD I: PRE POST PLANT ID QUIZ

Name:

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- 1.

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  - 2.

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  - 3.

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  - 4.

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  - 6.

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  - 7.

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  - 8.

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  - 9.

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  - 10.

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  - 11.

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  - 12.

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  - 13.

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  - 14.

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  - 15.

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REACTIONS

## Data Collection Method II: End of Program Survey

1. What were the major strengths of the course?

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2. What do you feel could have been improved in the course?

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MARKETING

3. How did you learn about the short course? (circle all that apply)

1 DIRECT MAIL

2 COOPERATIVE EXTENSION NEWSLETTER

3 FRIEND

4 PNA MAILING

5 NEWSPAPER

6 PGH. CIVIC GARDEN CENTER NEWSLETTER

7 OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

REACTIONS

4. If you are working in the horticulture field professionally, to what extent did the class provide you with information that will enhance your job performance? (circle number)

1 HARDLY ANY

2 SOME

3 A LOT

4 A GREAT DEAL

NEEDS  
ASSESSMENT

5. What topics would you like covered in a short course with a similar format?

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REACTIONS

6. How was the length of the short course? (circle number)

1 TOO LONG

2 TOO SHORT

3 JUST RIGHT

REACTIONS

7. How was the number of plants covered? (circle number)

1 TOO LONG

2 TOO SHORT

3 JUST RIGHT

REACTIONS

8. How would you rate the time the course was offered? (circle number)

1 GOOD TIMING

2 POOR TIMING



When would you like a similar course offered?

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SKILLS &  
KNOWLEDGE  
QUESTION

9. As a direct result of the short course, did your: (please circle the appropriate answer)

Tree identification skills

STAY  
THE SAME

SLIGHTLY  
INCREASE

GREATLY  
INCREASE

Tree selection knowledge

STAY  
THE SAME

SLIGHTLY  
INCREASE

GREATLY  
INCREASE

Tree Pest Susceptibility

STAY  
THE SAME

SLIGHTLY  
INCREASE

GREATLY  
INCREASE

## Data Collection Method III: Follow-up Post Program Mail Survey

Please check all the short courses you attended.

_____	1987	Trees for the Times	Dr. Michael Dirr
_____	1988	Herbaceous Perennials	Dr. Darrel Apps
_____	1989	Shrubs For Your Landscape	Dr. Michael Dirr
_____	1990	Ornamental Grasses	Rick Darke
_____	1990	Groundcovers	Darrel Apps & Dr. Charles Heuser
_____	1991	Conifers	William Thomas
_____	1992	Herbaceous Perennials	Dr. Allan Armitage
_____	1992	Shade Tree Field Trip	Secret Arboretum, Wooster, Ohio
_____	1993	Bulbs for All Seasons	Brent Heath
_____	1994	Small Trees	Dr. Michael Dirr
_____	1995	Ferns/Vines	Joan Gottlieb & Harrison Flint
_____	1995	Annuals/Perennials	Joe Seals & Mary Ann McGourty

TARGET  
AUDIENCE  
PROFILE

1. Are you employed in the horticulture field? (circle one)

- 1 NO
- 2 YES

KNOWLEDGE  
QUESTION

2. To what extent has attendance at the short courses increased your knowledge of *plant identification*.  
(circle one)

- 1 HARDLY ANY
- 2 SOME
- 3 A LOT
- 4 A GREAT DEAL

How have you used this knowledge?

VALIDITY

•

•

PERCEIVED  
VALUE OF  
KNOWLEDGE

4. If the courses increased your plant material knowledge, how did this improve the *quality* of your business operations? (circle number)

- 1 DIRECTLY
- 2 INDIRECTLY
- 3 NOT AT ALL
- 4 NOT APPLICABLE

PERCEIVED  
VALUE OF  
KNOWLEDGE

5. If the courses increased your plant material knowledge, how did this improve the *quantity* of your business operations? (circle number)

- 1 DIRECTLY
- 2 INDIRECTLY
- 3 NOT AT ALL
- 4 NOT APPLICABLE

**PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN IN THE POST PAID ENVELOPE BY DECEMBER 5.**

**For further information about the evaluation, please contact Michael C. Masiuk ([mmasiuk@psu.edu](mailto:mmasiuk@psu.edu)). This Web site is copyrighted by the Pennsylvania State University. The information may be used for educational purposes but not sold for profit.**