



## The Responsibility To Publish


In my travels, I have had the opportunity to visit many different nurseries and see a variety of unique and thoughtful innovations. Because forest tree nurseries practice such a small, highly specialized form of horticulture, nursery managers have had to adapt existing technologies and equipment to meet their needs. The cultural regimes of each nursery are also unique and reflect that nursery's particular physical, social, and economic environment.

As individuals, we each have a unique perspective that allows us to see different aspects of the same situation. These differences have stimulated creative ideas that lead to innovations. Each of us has a professional obligation to share this technical knowledge with others in our field. The best way to share information is to publish. I have to do a lot of technical writing in my job: the *Forest Nursery Notes*, articles for proceedings or journals, and books like the *Container Tree Nursery Manual* (five volumes done, two more to go). Initially I was intimidated, but soon I came to realize that I'd better learn how to express myself in writing if I was going to be effective. I came to understand that technical writing is the only efficient way to reach a large number of people. Because writing generates a permanent record of information, I found that I didn't have to continually explain the same technique or concept to different people.

There are other benefits of technical writing. Forcing yourself to put your ideas down on paper is a valuable mental exercise. Verbal ideas are generally "fuzzy" as well as extremely transient, and often have to be reevaluated after they are committed to paper (or computer screen). Because technical writing forces you to expose your ideas to criticism, it is the most honest form of communication.

Okay, assuming that I've convinced you to try technical writing, now let me explain why you should write for *Tree Planters' Notes*! If you are a nursery manager, you don't have the time or training to be a researcher and run experiments. But articles that reflect your direct experience or observation could be valuable. Perhaps you could report on one of the small operational trials that you've done. Almost every nursery has conducted field tests of a new pesticide or fertilizer, or slightly modified some cultural operation. These tests are rarely laid out in an experimental design and are therefore not suitable for rigid statistical analysis. Contrary to popular opinion, this does not make them worthless. Nursery people are also great tinkerers. There is always a way to make something better, and so *every* piece of nursery equipment has been modified to some degree. These modifications need to be documented and shared.

To encourage such "tech transfer" by nursery and reforestation practitioners, *Tree Planters' Notes* is inaugurating a new section called "Practical Tips," for publishing reports by on-the-ground nursery folk. These articles will be reviewed by one of the tech transfer specialists on the editorial board as well as by a scientist. If you feel uncomfortable about writing a technical article, find someone who can help. I feel that one of my technology transfer responsibilities is to identify promising new information and help get it into



print. My two counterparts in the USDA Forest Service's Northeastern Area (Ron Overton) and the Southeastern Area (Clark Lantz) would also be willing to help. Give us a call: Tom Landis (503) 326-6231, Ron Overton (612) 649-5241, and Clark Lantz (404) 347-3554.

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(Adapted from *Forest Nursery Notes*, January 1990)

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**Note:** Our concept of this editorial space is that it should be a place to publish opinions and ideas relating to the reforestation profession. We invite you to submit ideas for commentaries. The views expressed here are solely those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the *Tree Planters' Notes* editorial staff, the Forest Service, or the U.S. Department of Agriculture.