

Plant Talk

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Where Ecology Meets Economy

by Michael Yanny

This past September Johnson's Nursery and SEWISC (Southeast Wisconsin Invasive Species Consortium) hosted a meeting called **Where Ecology meets Economy—A Forum for Green Industry and Land Management Professionals**. It was quite a successful event. Everyone fit comfortably into our warehouse building along with an impressive array of sponsors and some tasty food. We had 149 people attend from a wide range of professions. There were landscape architects and designers, land managers of natural areas, land managers of commercial properties, municipal foresters, commercial arborists, nature center educators, nursery people, landscape contractors, plant breeders, horticulturists, naturalists, biologists, restoration ecologists, DNR invasive plants specialists, research scientists and gardeners. It was really quite a mix of people—unusual to say



SEWISC - Where Economy Meets Ecology meeting at Johnson's Nursery - Menomonee Falls, WI (Sept 2013)



A quote from my poem, "Life is rich, with quarters and pine cones, nickles and acorns, flowers and dollars."

the least. Many of the people were well versed in the affairs of invasive plants in Wisconsin while others were hearing some of the discussions for the first time. I suspect most everyone in attendance learned something on that perfect, sunny, fall day. I know I learned a lot. Many people liked the panel discussion in the afternoon. Diverse opinions were expressed in that session. Press on the following link (and scroll to the bottom of the page - [Watch videos here](#)) to see the videos that captured the panel discussion and 3 of the presentations. Mine is the first one up. Without photoshop enhancement you'll probably see I'm much less interesting in video than in print. Following is a poem I wrote that I read at the meeting:

Ecology—Economy

Ecology—Economy

**It's a two letter difference
in language and life**

**Economy—Ecology
Ecology—Economy**

**Ecology is economical,
Survival of the fittest
Economy is ecological
Work together or go broke.**

continued on page 2

Ecology-Economy continued

**Ecology--Economy
Economy--Ecology**

The economy of the world requires humans to work together through trade of goods and services. Without the goods and services the economy crumbles.

The ecology of the world requires goods and services be provided by the various biological components of the system. Without the goods and services the ecology crumbles.

**Economy--Ecology
Ecology--Economy**

**Ecologists must understand economics.
It's a part of their science,
just like physiology and taxonomy.
Economists need to feel the natural world or
they will break it.**

**Ecology--Economy
Economy--Ecology**

**Ecologists are human.
So are Economists.
They have a common life form
and an interest in a better life.
That's good!!!**

**Economy--Ecology
Ecology--Economy**

**Life is rich
With quarters and pine cones,
nickels and acorns,
flowers and dollars.
There is no reason not
to work together
for the common good
of living well.**

**Ecology--Economy
Economy--Ecology**

**It's a two letter difference
in language and life**

Ecology--Economy



*The local ecotypes of *Corylus americana*, American Filbert often times have beautiful fall colors.*

My take home message from the meeting was that the Green Industry and Land Managers can work together in a thoughtful and respectful manner. We may not always agree with each other but we can listen to each other, learn, and build on commonalities that help us all. I learned from Steve McCarthy that we need to have more sensitivity to the history of place in landscape design of our public spaces and that native plant materials are often times a better alternative in places where we need to define our locality. I learned from Brent McCown that the development of sterile polyploid cultivars is an achievable goal as far as reducing invasive characteristics in plants. He also stated that sterility is never 100% and that things change over time so monitoring of the changes is critical in the management of plant invasions in the future. I thought that was very wise advice. Brian Russart taught me that an organized realistic plan in conjunction with collaborative efforts with whoever is willing to help can be an effective way to battle

continued on page 3

Where Ecology Meets Economy continued

invasives in an urban environment. His efforts can be a model for others to follow. That was really good stuff!

There were things said at the meeting that I didn't agree with as I'm sure others felt as well, but overall there was a tremendous amount of factual information and inspirational ideas that were exchanged. I hope this was the start of an improvement in relations between the Green Industry and Land Managers for years to come.

Following are some suggestions I presented at the meeting of how to get a handle on the invasive plants situation in Wisconsin:

1 Do not continue to grow and market invasive plants.

Since the passage of NR40, the Invasive Species legislation in Wisconsin, numerous plants have been taken out of circulation due to their invasive characteristics. We all need to abide by these regulations and be active in the rule making process of the law to make sure that the natural areas managers are helped and the green industry is protected from any over reach regulation.

2 Green industry people such as landscape architects, nurserymen, arborists, landscape contractors and garden center managers, must stay abreast of new developments concerning invasive plants in Wisconsin. We need to show land managers and restorationists that we are good people trying to help with the cause of preserving our environment just as they are. We need to develop working relationships with the natural areas community to show them how we can help them. Following are some ideas that could be of assistance:

- Share nursery growing techniques with restorationists that may help them have more successful restoration projects.



Rhamnus alnifolia - our native Buckthorn. This plant could be an ally in battling the invasive *Rhamnus frangula*.

- Identify and develop antagonistic plants that can help restorationists fight invasives with non-invasive or native aggressors and cut down on restoration costs (see picture of *Rhamnus alnifolia*)
- Make non-invasive alternatives available in the marketplace to prevent the next Buckthorn or Garlic mustard from happening again.
- Grow a wider selection of local ecotype native plants and make them available on a contract grow basis to ensure availability and sales of the material.

continued on page 4



Nurseries know how to grow plants very well and quickly. Sharing some of the tricks of this trade could be very helpful to restorationists. (7 year old *Ostrya virginiana* is pictured above)

Where Ecology Meets Economy continued

- Select cultivars of local ecotype material to give landscape architects predictability within the native flora. It can also add some WOW to native species that have not been improved upon by horticultural selection. (see picture below of *Carpinus car. JN* upright, Firespire® Musclemwood)
- Select non-invasive (sterile) cultivars of problematic species to allow for a smooth transition from destructive invasives to non-destructive alternatives.



Firespire® Musclemwood has colorful flowers, fruits, and leaves in early to mid-October. The small catkin flowers are colorful in early spring.

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Available Online**

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I read this poem as part of my presentation poems. It was meant to unify those in attendance to help them realize that we all have something in common. We are.....

Plant People

**We come together
Earthbound
To celebrate
Photosynthesis—
Energy captured by greenness
In our hearts
And in their leaves
From our star
—the sun—
Who moves us both
Plant and man—together
To gather the light
And eat
Its richness
For the purpose
Of sharing it
With others
And
Smiles.**

Johnson's Nursery was very pleased with this year's forum and would like to host another next year. We will keep you informed of when the event will take place. Feel free to send me suggestions for topics and speakers.