

FINAL REPORT
FOREST SERVICE GRANT NO. NA-98-0330

Period covered by this report: July 29, 1998 through June 30, 2000

NOTE: Please review the following information and revise/complete as necessary.

Issued to: University of Delaware
Address: Department of Plant & Soil Sciences, 149 Townsend Hall, Newark, DE 19717-1303

Congressional District Number: _____

Project Name: Getting the Word Out: Graphic Campaign to Communicate Tree-planting Principles

Contact Person/Principal Investigator:

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Date of Award: July 29, 1998

Grant Modifications: N/A

Date of Expiration: June 30, 2000

Funding: Federal Share: \$55,540 plus Grantee Share: \$65,242 = Total Project: \$120,782

FS Grant Manager: Phil Rodbell
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Please provide an abstract on your project and its results (approximately 200 words or less).

**Getting the Word Out: Graphic Campaign to Communicate
Tree-planting Principles
Final Report**

Project abstract:

This project produced a display that can be used in garden centers to effectively educate customers about proper tree selection, planting and care. Design criteria were gathered from the industry. Focus group research and model testing with garden center owners and managers provided input in the design process. A graphic artist designed a vertical banner and tree hanging tags to communicate simple planting methods.

The display was produced and distributed to a select group of garden centers that agreed to provide survey information. Surveys were conducted at four pilot site locations during the summer and fall. Consumer response to the display was positive with 75 percent of survey respondents expressing that the display gave them confidence and increased their knowledge of tree selection, planting and care. Seventy percent responded that they felt encouraged to plant a tree after viewing the banner. An industry-marketing firm sold banners during the spring of 2000. Widespread use of this display in garden centers will help consumers learn to implement simple, but critical tree selection, planting and care techniques.

Project objectives:

1. Solicit input from tree retailers.
2. Design an education tool — graphic display for garden centers.
3. Develop a take-home promotional piece.
4. Distribute display to select garden centers.
5. Collect data from trial garden centers.
6. Conduct in-depth surveys at two garden centers.
7. Distribute displays to interested garden centers.

Objectives met successfully:

1. We conducted two focus groups with industry representatives at the ANLA meeting in Atlanta, GA and the Earl May Seed Company Cooperative Meeting in Kansas City, MO.
2. Based on the input from the industry, the design team developed two proposals and presented them to industry representatives at the ANLA Management Clinic in Louisville, KY on February 4, 1999. A short survey was used to solicit industry input.
3. More detailed recommendations (sixteen bulleted points) were printed on a take-home piece. A tree hanger and trunk liner were selected based on samples presented at the ANLA Management Clinic.

4. Based on the evaluation at the ANLA Management Clinic a final display format was selected and refined. The format selected was a vertical banner using the Trees Add Life logo and a four-step instruction format.
5. We selected twenty-five pilot sites across the U.S. based on information collected at the ANLA Management Clinic. All sites received two banners, display hardware, instructions, promotional information, a supply of tree hangers, and a roll of trunk liners.
6. A vendor was selected to produce the Trees Add Life materials.
7. The materials were shipped to the 25 sites in early May 1999.
8. We developed a Trees Add Life web page (www.treesaddlife.org)
9. A survey was developed and mailed to the 25 participating sites asking about their initial reaction and display set-up experiences (June, 1999).
10. Questions relating to tree planting confidence were included in a statewide survey of Delaware households (May through July, 1999).
11. Customers at four garden centers were surveyed using a pre- and post-shopping instrument in June and September 1999. A total of 200 interviews were conducted.
12. A Garden Center Display Contest was conducted during Fall 1999. Hicks Nursery received first place and Schwartz Garden Center received second place. Photographs of all the entries including judges' comments are posted on the web page.
13. Post-season data from pilot sites were collected during Fall 1999.
14. Results from the customer and pilot site surveys were be presented at the ANLA Management Clinic in February 2000.
15. The graphic designer created an additional companion banner with a promotional focus to accompany the educational banner.
16. An industry-marketing firm — Sunrise Marketing took over production and distribution of banners and tree tags.

Major research findings.

Surveys were used to determine the impact of the displays on tree promotion and customers' perception of tree selection, planting and maintenance principles. Information was gathered from three main sources:

- General population survey of tree planting confidence (n=800)
- Customer intercept surveys at four garden centers (n=200)
- Pre and Post season survey of participating garden centers (25)

Respondents from the general population survey most confident in maintaining trees (35% very confident and 45% confident) followed by tree planting (28% very confident and 50% confident) and slightly less confident selecting trees (25% very confident, 45% confident).

In the customer pre survey, most customers described their overall knowledge of tree planting as good (37%) but some respondents describing their tree planting knowledge as fair (28%) or weak (18%). This data indicates an opportunity to increase knowledge and ultimately increase tree sales. In the post survey, customer response to the Trees Add

Life banner was very positive. Over three-fourths of the respondents had a positive response to the overall look of the banner, the color scheme and the clarity of information. Customers had a similar response to the tree hangers. Garden center customers agreed that the Trees Add Life display materials were helpful (95%), gave them confidence to plant trees (80%), increased their knowledge about tree planting (75%) and encouraged planting (70%).

Garden center pilot site participants received two surveys—one as soon as they received the display materials and one at the end of the season. Pilot participants had a positive reaction to the banners, rating the overall look (93%), size (100%), color scheme (85%) and clarity (94%) as good or excellent. Most respondents felt the display had a positive impact on their customers (very positive, 28% and positive, 52%).

How will this project increase the knowledge we have about urban forestry? How did the public benefit?

This display communicates key selection, planting and maintenance techniques graphically. If the display is used in many garden centers across the country, it will become familiar and recognizable to customers. Each time a customer views the display; it serves as a reminder of the key techniques for planting success. The display includes a take home piece in the form of a tree hanger to provide more detailed explanations of planting and maintenance practices that customers can review at home. Banners and tree tags are sold as a promotional package that includes ad slicks, newsletter columns and display suggestions to help retailers make the most of this display to promote tree sales and educate their customers.

Recommendations for community foresters and others.

We demonstrated that banners are an excellent tool for communicating simple planting and tree benefit information to consumers. These banners are available from Sunrise Marketing (888-393-4443) for \$75 (plus shipping and handling). A Trees Add Life package includes a 30- by 50-inch, four-color banner; newsletter articles; 25 sample Trees Add Life hanging tree tags; assorted promotional templates; logos and ad slicks; and a listing on the Trees Add Life website. The promotional banner is planned for production in Fall, 2000. These banners could easily be incorporated into an educational tree planting display.

Publications.

Barton, S.S. 2000. Trees Add Life. *American Nurseryman*, Vol. 191, Issue 7, pgs. 98-102.

How will the results be disseminated to the public?

- Garden centers use the display in their sales areas. Take home pieces (tree hangers) are disseminated to individuals from participating garden centers.
- Web site contains information on tree planting and includes all Trees Add Life materials. There is a homeowner and industry section of the website (treesaddlife.org)
- Summary reports from survey data have been presented to industry representatives at the ANLA Management Clinic (Feb. 2000) and SNA Meeting (August 2000) and are displayed on the web site.

Photo or Illustration:

Photos and illustrations are available on the website (treesaddlife.org). Two floppy disks have been included, each containing a banner file (info2.jpg and promo2.jpg).

List the active partners (key individuals or organizations) involved in the project to-date:

Susan Barton, University of Delaware
Tom Ilvento, University of Delaware
Gary Schwetz, Delaware Center for Horticulture
Barbara Broge, Graphic Artist, University of Delaware
Monnie Givens, Graphic Artist, University of Delaware
Duane Psota, Earl May Seed Company - organized focus group
Joel Albizo, ANLA — organized focus group
Clint Albin, Garden Center Marketing Group — developed promotional avenues
Kurt Fromhertz, Sunrise Marketing — created website and market promotional packages

How would you evaluate the grant process?

The process worked very well. The use of preproposals is helpful so that time is not spent preparing detailed proposals for projects that are unlikely to receive funding. The reporting process was not cumbersome.

This report was prepared by:

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Title: Extension Specialist

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Date: July 11, 2000