

## CUTTING COSTS IN NURSERY OPERATIONS

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One way to de-emphasize costs is to increase the price of your product--seedlings, and hope you can sell them. As I stated at the last Conference, Reforestation is governed by the optimism of the investor. In our case, the investor speculates on the demand for a finished forest product 20-40 years in the future, or the demand for a forestry related land use.

Certain lands in these inflationary times appear to be a commodity to be sold and not owned or held for any length of game. The loser in the game being the last buyer before a land market bust. One inflated real estate deal in a rural area can upset land prices, taxes and public opinion for miles around. This directly affects reforestation.

Land improvement by reforestation means greater investment, higher taxes. Unless a future profit to the landowner is assured by fair market prices and other land use returns, then seedling sales will decrease.

Hand labor is our problem in Georgia both in cost and availability. It seems that weed-pulling is a degrading vocation and wage scales are dictated rather than bargained for. We are trying to eliminate hand labor through nursery management and mechanization. Even in these areas, the road narrows to almost a dead-end due to limitations on what is allowed in chemical use and mechanical operation and use.

Traditional practices and refinements will have to be amended. As a nurseryman said concerning last summers weeds;"Don't worry, the frost will get them". We may have to live with some weeds. Lifting and shipping to a scheduled date may be changed to take advantage of mechanical harvesting when weather permits.

Cold storage is almost necessary for a continuous supply of seedlings. This is essential during periods of inclement weather when mechanical harvesting is depended upon in nurseries with heavy soils. Cold storage facilities are desirable for early and late season lifting as well as storage during mild winter conditions. A prolonged above 50 F temperature is conducive to mold in Kraft bags.

The search for shipping containers that permit inspection at time of delivery would alleviate the "pig in a poke" delimma. Corrugated boxes are ideal but not as economical as Kraft bags. A scheme for return and reuse of boxes could be worked out with customers, that might permit use of more expensive containers.

If applied research in the three or four problems areas mentioned were made and a workable solution found, then production costs as well as blood pressure would go down.