

Intermountain Nursery Association: An Historical Account of 30 Years' Progress - 1960-1989¹

Marvin D. Strachan²

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Abstract.--This paper reports on the 30-year history of the Intermountain Nursery Association. The persons active in organizing the Association as well as those active and responsible for important progress through the years are noted. The difference in discussion topics between 30 years ago and now are also noted. The importance and progress in technology transfer is pointed out. A condensed review of all previous meetings has been prepared and is included as an appendage to the 1989 proceedings.

It is a pleasure and an honor for me to speak to you today pertaining to the historical aspects of the Intermountain Nursery Association. There are less than 250 forest nurseries producing tree planting stock for conservation/reforestation use in the United States and I have found that nurserymen are some of the most sincere and dedicated people I have known. You are my kind of people.

The Intermountain Nursery Association originated in 1960, at a time when most of the state and federal nurseries in the region were either new or had experienced major expansion as a result of the USDA Soil Bank programs. Agricultural leaders throughout the nation felt that trees planted on agricultural Soil Bank acres would permanently take cropland acres out of production and relieve national agricultural surpluses. A corresponding shortage of adaptable tree planting stock was recognized and the various states were encouraged to establish nurseries to produce the tree planting stock necessary to plant the cropland acres taken out of production. Federal USDA funds were made available for nursery establishment and expansion.

The nurseries so affected were developed very rapidly. Suitable nursery sites had to be located, soils and water had to be tested for optimum seedling production capabilities, irrigation water supply developed, and funds obligated for facilities, equipment, and all supplies necessary to produce and distribute seedling trees during the fiscal year fund allocation.

Most of the new nurseries were developed or expanded on lands previously occupied by agricultural crops and far removed from forest soil conditions. Problems developed early on with soil conditions, climate, soil/species adaptation, lack of technique and technology and adequate production funding. Most of the new nurserymen, with limited nursery experience, were looking to the Lake States, West Coast, and Southeast regions for technology transfer to assist in their local problems. Formation of the Intermountain Nurserymen's Association was a welcome experience to these nurserymen.

Leadership in the initial stages was provided by encouragement from the Intermountain State Foresters and through the efforts of Marv Strachan and Wally Wheeler, Division of State & Private Forestry, USFS, Denver, in calling the nurserymen in the region together for organizational purposes. The Association started with a small number of nurseries represented but grew annually with the addition of nurseries in North Dakota, the prairie provinces of Canada, the reforestation nurseries in Montana and Idaho and representatives from Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and Nevada. Research and Administrative representa-

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²Marvin D. Strachan is retired Nursery Manager, Colorado State Forest Service, Fort Collins, CO and a former Nursery Manager and founder of the Big Sioux Nursery, Watertown, SD.

tives from the various state and federal agencies enhanced a much broader perspective of nursery operations.

An even broader scope of nursery production, equipment use, seedling handling and nursery management was attained through the efforts of Homer "Red" Ward, Washington State Department of Natural Resources. His encouragement and invitations for the Intermountain Nurserymen to meet jointly with the Western Forest Nursery Council began in 1964 and continued in 1967, 1968, and 1969. The first joint meeting was held at the Coeur d'Alene nursery in 1970. The joint merger of the two nursery organizations was proposed several times but in each case the merger was rejected by vote of the organizations. Each organization wished to maintain separate nursery associations but would meet jointly whenever possible. The Intermountain Nursery Association meets every other year during even dated years. The Intermountain Nurserymen meet jointly with the Western Forest Nursery Council during the even dated years.

Further assistance to the Intermountain Nursery Association was provided in 1978 with the selection of Steve McDonald, USFS, as a Westwide Nursery Specialist. Tom Landis followed in this position in 1981. The nursery specialist not only enhanced nursery technology transfer between nurseries in the region and provided liaison within the nursery industry but also assisted in annual meeting program development, compilation of papers and funding for printing of the proceedings of the Intermountain Nursery Association annual meetings beginning in 1980.

During the 1985 annual meeting, the membership voted to change the name of the Intermountain Nurserymen's Association to the present name of INTERMOUNTAIN NURSERY ASSOCIATION.

A review of the past proceedings provide many memorable thoughts of the many experiences and progress of the association. Not only has the nursery association provided the opportunity for nurserymen to visit and learn from nurseries in most states in the western half of the country but also have provided for special events. Some of these special events have been:

(1) The North American Containerized Forest Tree Symposium held in Denver, Colorado in 1974. This symposium brought together many nurserymen, foresters and scientists throughout the United States, Canada and many foreign countries to learn of the state-of-the-art in containerized seedling production.

(2) The tour of containerized nurseries in Oregon in 1978 for Intermountain Nurserymen sponsored and hosted by the USFS through efforts of Steve McDonald and Frank Ter Bush. This happened at a time when several of the Intermountain nurseries were very new in containerized production or were contemplating entering into this mode of production.

(3) The North American Forest Tree Nursery Soil Management Workshop in Syracuse, New York in 1980. This workshop brought together nurserymen from throughout the United States and Canada to learn more of nursery soil management. Such special events have been of great value to the nurserymen and were made possible through your association.

One of the most important things that has happened within the Intermountain Nursery Association during the past 30 years is the advance in technology. This evidence is dramatic when examining the proceedings for the past three years. Such topics as:

(1) Computer vision for grading seedlings

(2) Field performance of mini-plug transplants

(3) Root growth potential as an indicator of outplanting performance

(4) Superabsorbent hydrogels and their beneficial long-term opportunities

(5) Nursery crop management computer system

(6) Cumulative trauma disorders in forest nursery workers

(7) Monitoring cold hardiness of tree seedlings by infrared thermography

(8) Bedhouse seedling production

(9) Irrigation according to PMS and tensiometer instruments.

These things were never heard of, or not used, 30 years ago. However, the more things change, the more they stay the same as evidenced by topics in the past three years' proceedings. Some problems seem to be continuous items for discussion since the beginning of time as follows:

(1) Nursery practices/seedling sizes/field performance

(2) Effect of nursery culture on morphological and physiological development of seedlings

(3) Impact of lifting date and storage on field performance

(4) A stock quality assessment procedure for characterizing nursery grown seedlings

(5) Effects of nursery density on pine seedlings

(6) Fall lifting--its effects on dormancy intensity of ponderosa pine seedlings

(7) Weed control--alternatives to herbicides

(8) Some effects of cold storage on seedling physiology

(9) Fumigation effect on soil-borne pathogens, mycorrhizae, and growth of seedlings

(10) Soil compaction--effects on seedling growth

(11) Herbicides for conifers--what's new?

(12) When to measure seedling quality in bareroot nurseries

(13) Soil mapping and testing

(14) Organic matter--how much is enough?

(15) Should private nurseries produce seedlings for federal/state reforestation programs?

One topic that seems to tell most of the story was found in the proceedings of the 28th meeting in 1988. The topic was entitled "Fixing the Edsel: Can Bareroot Stock Quality be Improved?" It seems that as long as we have forest nurserymen they will press for more technology and better application to grow a better tree.

Thank you ladies and gentlemen for inviting me here today to review the past 30 years of progress in the Intermountain Nursery Association.