



Western Kentucky Nursery Crop Update

Grower Highlight: Powell's Hardwoods



The month of April marks the first of a series of articles highlighting some of the Nurseries of Western Kentucky. The idea behind these features is to share new and innovative methods of nursery crop production that have been successful during these slow business times. And if you're looking for innovation, you don't need to look far. Kentucky boasts its own group of plant enthusiasts and one of my favorites is Phillip Powell.

Not far from Murray, near Kentucky Lake, Phillip runs Powell's Hardwoods. It doesn't take long talking with Phillip to get you excited about what he's working on. Whether it be his Japanese Maples (over 70 varieties), his first experiments in Bonsai that rival any long term

producer, or his top secret experiments, it's a safe bet that whatever Phillip is trying will be a success. The key to his success is that willingness to experiment and try new things on his own. Phillip is one of the most successful grafters around, all because he was able to develop his own method of doing things. This mentality could also explain the passion he has for RootMaker products. Phillip's entire operation uses their products and the quality speaks for itself. These bags are still not the most widely accepted production method available today, but Phillip's trees will make a believer out of the toughest skeptic. Phillip's Japanese Maples, Oaks, Pecan, American Beech, and Black Gum can all be bought with the confidence of knowing that these trees were grown by using thoroughly tested methods.

It's easy to see what we can all learn from Phillip. We can't be afraid to experiment

and try new things. It can be intimidating sometimes to risk any financial losses to a new production method, but experimenting could pose little to no loss if done in small trials. It's also important to go into risky ventures with the mentality that you will be better at your craft for having the experience. Those growers who choose to educate themselves in such ways will be the ones who set themselves up for the most success in the future when the industry turns again for the better.



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Pest Alert: Gouty and Horned Oak Gall

Word from pathologists in Missouri reports a large increase in cases of gouty and horned oak gall. Nurseries in the Western Kentucky area should keep an eye open for these galls on their oaks also, as this issue seems to have already made its way into our area with confirmed cases in the Western Kentucky area. Growers need to be thorough in the detection of this disease as the removal of infested plant material is the most effective method of control.

Gouty and horned oak gall are caused by small wasps that initiate and live in the galls. These galls can take several years to mature before the wasps will emerge. Control with pesticide usage has had limited success as the wasps are physically protected inside the gall. Pruning lightly infested trees may prevent a total loss.



A Warm Start

We've had a warm start to the year so far, and according to the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture Weather Center, we may be heading for drought conditions.

According to the Louisville National Weather Service, temperatures across the state have been 7-10 degrees warmer than average. The weather has not only been warm, but it's also been dry. The central areas of the state are predicted to be in drought conditions through July.

While this expected drought does not yet affect the Western Kentucky area, it would

be advisable for growers to double check their water sources and be prepared in case this expected drought is expanded into our area. If soil moisture levels are allowed to fall too low, root growth can cease and there can be a gap as long as 6 weeks before growth can resume (Watson and Himelick 1997).

This lag in growth could easily set a crop behind and should be avoided if at all possible. Updates on the drought situation can be found online at the [University of Kentucky College of Ag Weather Center](http://www.ca.uky.edu/HLA/Dunwell/).

