Technology Transfer

The Buckeye Yard And Garden Line

James A. Chatfield¹, Joseph F. Boggs², and David J. Shetlar³

Additional index words. Electronic mail, interdisciplinary, World Wide Web, green industry

Summary. The Buckeye Yard and Garden Line (BYGL) is a user-friendly, interdisciplinary, timely avenue on the information superhighway developed in Ohio and applicable as a model for horticultural information delivery throughout the United States.

The Buckeye Yard and Garden Line (BYGL) is a weekly (April to October) electronic-mail newsletter covering nursery, landscape, and turfgrass problems in Ohio. BYGL is developed from a weekly Meet-Me conference call of extension agents and specialists in Ohio [the Ohio State Univ. (OSU) Extension Nursery Landscape and Turf Team], covering the state geographically. From this conference, a 1- to 2-paragraph, user-friendly summary of topics discussed is E-mailed to a recipient list within 2 days of the phone conference.

Background

BYGL was started in 1990 by J.A. Chatfield and D.J. Shetlar as a service to Ohio county extension offices. It was a response to a common diagnostic dilemma: information about a new problem trickled into a county office just about the time that it no longer mattered for that year—about 2 weeks late. Greater timeliness was required.

¹Ohio State University Extension, Northeast District Office, Wooster, Ohio, and Horticulture and Crop Science Department, Columbus, Ohio.

²Ohio State University Extension, Hamilton County Office.

³Ohio State University Department of Entomology, Columbus, Ohio.

The cost of publishing this paper was defrayed in part by the payment of page charges. Under postal regulations, this paper therefore must be hereby marked advertisement solely to indicate this fact.

Since 1990, BYGL coverage has expanded in several ways. First, it was made available directly to individuals not working for extension. Ohio county offices were still the primary audience, but members of the green industry, especially garden centers, landscapers, arborists, and turf managers, were added to the mix, occasionally through electronic mail for those companies with E-mail addresses, but also through a same-day fax service (started in 1994) from key extension offices. These green-industry links were aided by funding from the Ohio Nursery and Landscape Association.

Secondly, the BYGL electronic distribution network was expanded. The E-mail recipient list was increased in 1993 to include extension offices in Kentucky and Indiana and selected university and Dept. of Agriculture offices in Pennsylvania. In 1994, BYGL was made available via the Internet by including BYGL on PenPages (Penn State's Internet site). A PenPages user analysis indicated that, by 1995, BYGL was being accessed by users in more than 20 states. In 1995, BYGL was made available to the World Wide Web with its placement on two Web sites: the OSU Horticulture in Virtual Perspective site, developed and maintained by Tim Rhodus of the OSU Dept. of Horticulture and Crop Science, and the Ohio chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture's Homepage.

Technology

BYGL was possible because of two recent technological advances: electronic-mail networks and telephone-bridge conferencing. E-mail saves transmission time and eliminates handling hard copies and the expense of postage.

Conference calls save time and expense associated with travel, and bridge conferencing is a great advance over typical conference calls, in phone expense and setup ease. Each conference participant simply calls a designated phone number each week, is logged onto a computer, and is then connected to the other conference participants. The charge for the call is for a local or long-distance call to the central computer (in this case, located in Columbus, Ohio).

Networking

BYGL is interdisciplinary: it links horticulturists, agronomists, plant pathologists, and entomologists and it links field faculty in Ohio counties with departmental faculty. This type of team networking is essential to modern extension educational programming and information delivery, as indicated by Leveridge et al. (1994) and Chatfield (1993). BYGL also includes contributors from the OSU Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (OARDC), the OSU Agricultural Technical Institute, and periodic contributions from the Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources, the Ohio Dept. of Agriculture, green-industry representatives, and contributors from outside Ohio.

BYGL is also linked to other OSU Extension informational services. For example, the brief 1- to 2-paragraph updates in BYGL are often expanded in depth and with graphics in the biweekly Pest Evaluation and Suppression Techniques (PEST) Newsletter by OSU entomologist Dave Shetlar (offered by subscription through the Ohio Nursery and Landscape Association).

Networking throughout the state provides a timely advance warning system when pest problems in southern Ohio presage later problems farther north. Key BYGL observations throughout the year are shared with the green

industry and other universities through inclusion in the yearly OARDC Ornamentals Annual Reports and Research Summaries Circular (Boggs et al., 1996; Chatfield et al., 1996).

Evaluation

Annual evaluation surveys of BYGL are sent to readers. A sampling from the 1995 survey (251 respondents) includes the following:

- 58% strongly agreed and 41% agreed (1% was neutral) that BYGL was useful to his or her job or business
- 48% strongly agreed and 43% agreed (9% was neutral) that BYGL was useful for clientele questions
- 46% strongly agreed and 48% agreed (6% was neutral) that BYGL was useful in identifying plant problems
- 62% strongly agreed and 33% agreed (4% was neutral, <1% disagreed) that BYGL was timely

Respondents also listed several specific uses of the BYGL. For example, information found in the BYGL was used in news articles, newsletters, and as an information base for radio and TV programming.

Sample

Here is a typical example of BYGL reports from BYGL 94-3:

FORSYTHIA BLOOM. By now everyone is weary of the saga of forsythia blooming only below the insulating snowline due to flower bud death during the January freeze (BYGL 94-1).

Occasionally someone calls and mentions that his forsythia is in full bloom, all the way to the top of the plant. What gives? It's not wishful thinking—perhaps he simply has one of the forsythia cultivars with more winter-hardy flower buds.

Chuck Behnke reports that Meadowlark is in full bloom in Medina County, and Chatfield saw this cultivar in full glory at Kingwood Center in Mansfield on 19 April. Michael Dirr, in his *Manual of Woody Landscape Plants*, notes that flower buds of Meadowlark are hardy to -35F. Chatfield's nurserywoman sister-in-law Jane also reports that the forsythia cultivar Northern Sun is in full bloom in chilly Maine.

The Buckeye Yard and Garden Line approach offers an economical and efficient way of getting timely information to extension, industry, and consumer clientele. As electronic mail becomes more widespread, an ever-increasing audience will benefit from this new methodology in communications.

For further information, or to subscribe to the BYGL, contact: fischnich.1@osu.edu.

Literature Cited

Boggs, J.F., D.J. Shetlar, G.Y. Gao, D.R. Balser, D.C. Caldwell, R.H. Zondag, and J.A. Chatfield. 1996. Plant insect pest problems in Ohio: 1995. Ohio Agr. Res. and Dev. Center Spec. Circ. 152:38-41.

Chatfield, J.A., N. Taylor, R.H. Zondag, M.A. Rose, G.Y. Gao, D.R. Balser, and D.J. Shetlar. 1996. Landscape ornamental disease problems in Ohio: 1995. Ohio Agr. Res. and Dev. Center Spec. Circ. 152:43-46.

Chatfield, James A. 1993. The Ohio State University Nursery Landscape Team, p. 12-13, 15. In: The Buckeye. Ohio Nursery and Landscape Assn., Westerville, Ohio. May.

Leveridge, S., C. Parliament, G.W. Morse, L. Templin, S. Engelmann, and R. Elmstrand. 1994. Revitalizing specialist—Agent collaboration in extension education. Choices (2):36-37.

Factors Influencing Volunteering in the Master Gardener Program

Frederick R. Rohs¹ and Robert R. Westerfield²

Summary. Limited budgets and downsizing have threatened the delivery of technological and educational information by the cooperative extension service. As such trends continue, volunteers become more important. Background factors, influence of specific individuals, attitudes toward the value of the program, and personal benefits received influence a person's decision to become a Master Gardener volunteer. In this study, individuals who were older than 50 and had children and parents who were former volunteers in an extension program were more likely to become Master Gardener volunteers, as were individuals who felt that the Master Gardener program benefited the community and themselves. Specific individuals, such as garden club members, other Master Gardeners, a neighbor, or persons holding leadership positions in the community, might also influence an individual's decision to volunteer.

Limited budgets and downsizing in the cooperative extension service have threatened program availability, expansion, and staffing. Such events have forced cooperative extension to reexamine the delivery of programs, technological information, and services. One way to maintain the current level of programs and services is to recruit and retain volunteers. Effective recruitment and retention depends on understanding why individuals volunteer.

The reasons for volunteer participation are many. Smith (1972) proposed that special attitudinal factors influence volunteer participation in addition to social background factors such as age, sex, and educational and income levels. These attitudinal factors include perceived benefits the community and society reap from the organization (societal value), perceived benefits individuals gain from volunteering in the organization (personal benefits), and the influence specific individuals have in the personal decision to volunteer.

Many Master Gardener volunteers feel that the community benefits greatly from the program. These benefits include beautifying the community, improving the citizenry through education (Relf and McDaniel, 1994), increasing community stewardship, and improving the environment (Hlubik and Weidman, 1995).

Personal benefits from volunteering as a Master Gardener include gaining knowledge, self improvement (Simonson and Pals, 1990; Stowe and Marr, 1992), and helping and working with others (Simonson and Pals, 1992). Other studies of extension volunteer programs (Rohs, 1986; VanTilburg-Norland, 1992) showed that

¹Professor of extension education, The University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602.

²County extension agent—horticulture, The University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602.

The cost of publishing this paper was defrayed in part by the payment of page charges. Under postal regulations, this paper therefore must be hereby marked advertisement solely to indicate this fact.