

STATE ISSUE: INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT

POSITION:

FNGLA supports the continued research and development of biological, physical, cultural and chemical tools necessary for nursery growers and landscape maintenance professionals to incorporate Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies into their overall management regimes.

BACKGROUND: Florida's nursery industry is arguably the most diverse sector of production agriculture in the state. The industry's success in Florida can be attributed in part to the warm sub-tropical climate ideal for the production of many plant species and cultivars. Unfortunately, Florida's warm climate is also the ideal setting for the proliferation of plant pests and diseases with the potential to disrupt or harm the nursery and landscape industry, as well as other segments of agriculture.

Traditionally, pest/disease problems were handled with seasonal pesticide applications to stop or retard the spread of harmful pests. However, nursery growers today are faced with increased pesticide costs, implementation of numerous worker protection and safety laws, and increased environmental concerns while meeting consumer demand for high quality disease/pest free plant material. One approach Florida growers are using to achieve their desired product is the incorporation of IPM principles. These include routine scouting for pests and diseases, using alternative methods to control harmful pest numbers such as biological or physical controls, increased research on genetic characteristics that help build plant immune systems and measured use of pesticides as preventive rather than curative measures. The IPM approach offers many benefits to nursery growers by minimizing potential impacts from pesticide drift, reducing worker contact to plants treated with pesticides and reducing the occurrence of pest resistance to chemical controls. All of this helps to lower the bottom-line costs to the consumer. Nevertheless, IPM is not fail-safe as growers assume the risks associated with incomplete scouting or monitoring which can lead to pest/disease outbreaks.

FNGLA supports and promotes research and technology designed to help growers incorporate IPM strategies into their management options. To this end, FNGLA seeks opportunities to partner with state and federal agencies, and the state's research institutions, to fund and develop projects that strengthen IPM strategies for all segments of Florida's nursery and landscape industry.