

Winning Tour in Ontario

The 2014 Conference Tour in Ontario was a winner in many ways! Numerous participants “won” a bottle of wine in the wine grab. Verbinnen Nursery provided homemade *appelbeignet* (apple fritters) which were definitely award-winning. And the weather was a big hit with everyone, which you probably didn’t expect in Canada, eh?



Here’s a tour comment from one long-time IPPSer, Darrel Apps, himself an award-winning plant breeder: "Most of the growers in the U.S. have become quite dependent on chemicals for insect and disease control in their greenhouses and are often somewhat skeptical of newer sustainable practices. I was really impressed how successfully the Canadians have been in accepting and introducing new cultural practices and biological control measures into their production schedules. The use of beneficial insects and their bottom flood recycled irrigation systems are two choice examples."

Here’s where we went:

[Westbrook Greenhouse Systems, Ltd.](#)

This is an 80,000 sq. ft. state-of-the-art manufacturing facility with offices and a total production area of thirty acres. In Ontario, these innovators are always in the vanguard of new ideas.

[Aldershot Greenhouses, Ltd.](#)

Len Vanderlugt, President of Aldershot Greenhouses gave us the tour himself, with his usual frank and open manner. In addition to their crop of highly mechanized potted roses, we toured outside to see the hellebores, wisteria and clematis. Len said he’s learned the most from his dreams that turned out to be mistakes. *Photo: Rose cuttings at Aldershot.*



[Connon Nurseries CBV](#)

This is both a retail garden center and a wholesale nursery. Their product lines include container-grown flowering shrubs, evergreens, perennials, ornamental grasses, and water plants. They currently employ over 150 full-time and seasonal staff.



[Winkelmolen Nursery Ltd.](#)

Celebrating 35 years in 2014, Winkelmolen Nursery is a wholesale grower focusing on bareroot and container production on 600 acres. Having emmigrated from Holland in the late 1970s, Jan Winkelmolen and Ans Mertens settled in southern Ontario, where they quickly gained a reputation for quality trees. They focus on growing native and ornamental shade trees as well as a selection of shrubs and

conifers. Grafting is serious business here. They do approximately 50 different top grafted varieties, ranging from weeping peashrub to weeping elm. *Photo: en route to see field plantings at Winkelmolen.*

[Verbinnen's Nursery Ltd.](#)

Verbinnen's Nursery specializes in native tree and shrub seedlings. Their products are used for naturalization projects, roadside plantings, commercial and residential landscaping and for wholesale growing. They grow about 100,000 field grown seedlings for bare root production, another 100,000 seedlings in plugs and over 150,000 trees and shrubs in containers ranging from a 1 to 15-gallons. We had a delicious and generous lunch here.



Tim Brotzman, left and Dennis Mareb are off to see Verbinnen's high density liner production under plastic mulch.

[Connon Nurseries NVK](#)

(Neil Vanderkruk Holdings, Inc.)

This is one of Canada's largest wholesale nurseries serving customers throughout Canada and several northeastern U.S. states. They operate on 850 acres and employ more than 200 employees. An additional 250 acres are under contract production in the local area. They rely on more than 100 specialty nurseries from across Canada, the U.S. and Europe to grow specific stock to round out their own inventory. We ended the day here with an impressive BBQ dinner and live auction in the specially created and beautiful atmosphere of the bareroot storage barn. (You had to see it to believe it!).

IPPS Past President Ron Amos had this to say about the conference, "I was impressed by the diversity of types of propagation and plant production on the tours. We saw everything from almost total automation to very basic seeding. I always bring home at

least one great idea to use in my operation. Talking with new members and guests – they are always surprised how willing members are to share information about their own production systems and techniques.”

Thanks so much to all the great work done by the Local Site Committee and the kind generosity of our tour stop hosts!

