

## Steering Committee Meeting – 2018

Report prepared by:

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### Introduction

A steering committee meeting was held on June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018, at the Texas A&M Research & Extension Center to advise the Extension Program Specialist in IPM position (Erfan Vafaie) with industry needs and priorities. The meeting was held from 12 pm – 1:30 pm and started with a short presentation on current IPM program specialist job description & responsibilities and past & current projects. Growers were then asked to provide a list of most economically important pests, current industry needs, and future industry needs. Once industry needs were identified, growers were asked to fill out a brief survey ranking the importance, environmental impact, and economic impact (rating 1 – lowest, 10 - highest) of each of the priorities on their own operations. Growers were also asked to provide an estimated annual economic value (\$) of the given priority to their operation. The results from meeting and survey are provided below.

### Results

Total growers attended: 5

Absentee growers: 2

Estimated metrics from growers that attended the meeting (from survey):

Total net sales (2017): \$97,300,000

Mean sales (2017): \$19,460,000

Full-time employees: 761

Part-time employees: 310

**Table 1.** Pests of greatest economic importance as identified by the growers.

#	Pest	Commodity
1	Ambrosia beetle	Tree growers (this year was bad); spray timing (population dynamics), type of sprays, trapping information. Hit healthy trees this year too
2	Thrips	Chilli thrips? Trees and bedding plants (western flower thrips)
3	Spider mites	Heat in the summertime. Nothing systemic nothing effective to manage. Bedding plants and potted fruit trees. Affected pretty much all growers.
4	Other borers (peach tree borer)	Potted trees, similar needs as ambrosia beetle
5	Tulip tree scale	Potted tree grower; No insecticide control
6	<i>Bemisia</i> (Q-biotype)	Bedding plant growers: (Coming in with cuttings from South America?)

**Table 2.** Priorities identified by growers and description. Priorities not ranked in any particular order. See table 3 for grower rankings.

#	Priority	Description
1	Scouting	Need for better scouting training/education programs: frequency of scouting, identification, recording (laborers & dedicated scouts). Critical point and best management practices reports.
2	Management	Skills/Training: How to develop a management program for particular insect pests (especially for smaller growers) OR full IPM manual backed by non-bias research
3	Interns	Help recruit interns and pull people into horticulture
4	Regulation	TDA, OSHA, and WPS compliance training. Training materials
5	TDA	Training TDA inspectors on <i>how</i> to inspect. How to do an inspection, basics of greenhouse & nursery operations, etc.
6	SANC	Systems Approach Nursery Certification. Harmonized certification program for nurseries and greenhouse operations.
7	Beneficials	Research and implementation in southern greenhouses of natural enemies for pest control
8	Insecticide Education	Public perception of insecticides; work with master gardeners
9	App	Pest scouting app

**Table 3.** Priority with average (mean) importance, environmental impact, and economic impact ratings. Economic value (in \$ for each growers own operation) also estimated by the grower. Numbers in parentheses represent minimum and maximum ratings/economic values.

#	Priority	Importance rating	Environmental impact rating	Economic impact rating	Economic value (\$)
1	Scouting	9 (8 – 10)	8.2 (7 – 10)	8.2 (8 – 10)	483,333 (100,000 – 1,100,00)
2	Management	8.4 (7 – 9)	8.75 (8 – 9)	8.4 (7 – 10)	139,166 (60,000 – 187,500)
3	Interns	8.2 (6 – 10)	6.8 (5 – 8)	8.6 (7 – 10)	9,500 (40,000 – 150,000)
4	Regulation	7.4 (6 – 9)	6.6 (4 – 8)	7.2 (6 – 9)	17,333 (2,000 – 40,000)
5	TDA	6.8 (5 – 8)	7.4 (6 – 9)	5.6 (5 – 6)	10,000 (10,000 – 10,000)
6	SANC	7.2 (6 – 8)	6.6 (6 – 8)	6.6 (6 – 7)	3,500 (2,000 – 5,000)
7	Beneficials	4.2 (3 – 6)	5.8 (3 – 9)	5 (3 – 8)	35,500 (31,000 – 40,000)
8	Insecticide Education	9.6 (9 – 10)	8.6 (7 – 10)	9 (8 – 10)	155,000 (40,000 – 270,000)
9	App	8.6 (8 – 10)	6.8 (3 – 10)	8 (7 – 10)	155,00 (60,000 – 250,000)

**Table 4.** Additional comments submitted by growers at the end of the meeting

#	Comment
1	Let's keep this going. I see potential for the committee to bring some positive results to our industry and help make all of us more sustainable!
2	Education about pesticide usage and responsibilities carried with it. Users should be knowledgeable about chemicals and their proper use. Should have good understanding of the benefits of chemicals as well as potential effects of misuse.
3	Get information out to smaller growers that may not get the same help as large growers.
4	The IPM specialist is very important to nursery industries in east Texas in assisting with current pest issues, testing new chemicals, research trials, communicating with growers. The growers need a person they trust and can get to and get answers.
5	You have done a great job supporting the industry over the last year. You do a great job presenting and everyone looks forward to your presentations. Don't hesitate to reach out educational email/ information blogs or whatever. Get out to the nurseries more often.

## Summary

The most economically important pests faced by potted tree growers in 2017 – 2018 includes ambrosia beetles, borers (in general), thrips, and tulip tree scale, whereas bedding plant/small potted growers identified Q biotype *Bemisia*, thrips, and spider mites as being the most economically important.

Although a total of 9 priorities were identified and discussed by the growers as current and future needs of the green industry in Texas, public education of insecticides, training resources/programs for better scouting, and training/resources for developing pest management strategies were ranked amongst the top three for importance, environmental and economic impact.

Additional comments suggested increased communication of new research/resources, especially to small growers (Table 4, #3 & #5), addressed the continued need for good pesticide stewardship (Table 4, #2), and positive feedback on the committee meeting experience and programs delivered by the IPM Extension Program Specialist (Table 4, #1 & #4).