

Experts: Disease-resistant plants enhance profits, client satisfaction

December 11 2009



Nursery growers and ornamental plant breeders can appreciate strong incentives to identify, grow, and promote top-performing ornamental plants for sustainable urban landscape use. Credit: Photo courtesy of Bill Klingeman, The University of Tennessee

New varieties of plants marketed as "disease-resistant" or "insect-resistant" are becoming more accessible to consumers. Available through local garden centers and catalogues, these attractive ornamentals often come with guarantees that offer amateur gardeners the promise of lower maintenance or the need for fewer pesticides.

But how does this trend toward the increased use of disease- and insect-resistant plants impact the profits of landscape and lawn care professionals, whose incomes often rely on maintenance visits and

pesticide applications in clients' gardens? To find what the experts think, William E. Klingeman from the University of Tennessee and colleagues at the University of Georgia surveyed lawn care and landscape maintenance professionals regarding the increased use of insect- and disease-resistant ornamental plants on grounds management, client satisfaction, and profitability. The report appeared in a recent issue of the journal *HortScience*.

Completed surveys were received from lawn care and landscape professionals in Tennessee, Florida, and Georgia. Data analyses revealed that respondents largely believe that insect- and disease-resistant plants will benefit their businesses and should result in increased client satisfaction. Less than 4% of respondents expressed concerns that their business would suffer if pest-resistant plants were made more available or used in greater numbers in clients' landscapes.

The professionals also indicated that they believe that 60% or more of the plants in a specific landscape would have to be resistant to [insect pests](#) or plant diseases to result in decreased company profits. Even if insect- and disease-resistant ornamental plants were used more widely in client landscapes, respondents expected that the required number of site visits to client landscapes would remain unchanged and that moderate reductions in insecticide and fungicide use would result. In short, the study proved that landscape management professionals accept and are willing to promote insect- and disease-resistant ornamental plants—good news for business and the environment.

Benefits to the survey findings, noted Klingeman, include "strong academic and commercial incentives to identify, grow, and promote insect- and disease-resistant ornamental plants for increased use within sustainable urban landscapes."

[More information:](#) The complete study and abstract are available on the

ASHS HortScience electronic journal web site:

[hortsci.ashspublications.org/c ... t/abstract/44/6/1608](https://hortsci.ashspublications.org/content/44/6/1608)

Source: American Society for Horticultural Science

Citation: Experts: Disease-resistant plants enhance profits, client satisfaction (2009, December 11) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-12-experts-disease-resistant-profits-client-satisfaction.html>

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