

Integrating instructional multimedia in nursery management, production courses

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Instructional multimedia can be effectively used to create virtual field trips in a variety of horticulture-related classes. Credit: Photo courtesy of Amy N. Wright

Students at land-grant universities are a major source of educated, highly qualified employees for the U.S. nursery industry. To prepare future employees for work in "green" occupations, land-grant institutions have traditionally offered classes in nursery management and production, but availability of qualified faculty, integration of departments, and cutbacks in horticulture programs have contributed to a reduction in the number of nursery management and production (NMP) courses being offered.

In a recent issue of [HortTechnology](#), Amy N. Wright, James A. Robbins, and Mengmeng Gu report on an online survey they designed to gather information about nursery management and production (NMP) course content and enrollment, attitudes regarding the use of multimedia

resources in the classroom, and opinions about the use of virtual field trips to supplement or replace traditional field trips.

To find out more about current practices in NMP, a survey was sent to instructors of [courses](#) that cover topics in NMP at 97 institutions in the U.S. According to Wright, corresponding author of the study; "Results reflected current organizational and curriculum changes that have impacted traditional horticulture courses such as NMP and in many cases have resulted in the merging of NMP courses with other courses such as greenhouse or garden center management." Most of the respondents indicated that the NMP course in their department included at least one field trip.

Traditional NMP courses include classroom lectures and observation of actual production systems and operations. Though the benefits of visual and on-site experiences are well-documented, budget constraints, time limits, transportation logistics, and limited access to qualified nurseries can make field trips challenging. Many instructors have turned to multimedia tools such as instructional DVDs and videos that can serve as "virtual field trips". The survey results supported this trend, showing a majority of respondents indicated that multimedia resources such as DVDs or web-based videos would be valuable for supplementing instruction in NMP, particularly for aspects that were not typically observed during field trips. Faculty who responded to the survey indicated a willingness to incorporate the use of multimedia resources into classroom instruction, and in many cases had already done so.

"In light of recent shifts in organizational structure (in departments that contain horticulture programs) as well as the current availability of and ease associated with using technology to provide instruction, opportunities exist to create new and innovative methods for instructional delivery in NMP courses", the researchers wrote. "Ideally, a series of instructional videos—arranged by topic and implemented in

NMP and other courses—could increase exposure to and understanding of an agricultural industry that continues to grow and be profitable."

More information: The complete study and abstract are available on the ASHS HortTechnology electronic journal web site:

[horttech.ashspublications.org/ ... nt/abstract/20/3/646](https://horttech.ashspublications.org/...nt/abstract/20/3/646)

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