

Ontario Area Meeting: Irrigation How To's

Sixty Eastern Region members and non-members enjoyed a day of seminars and tours that highlighted irrigation with a focus on the implementation of the evapotranspiration model.

Over the past few years growers have adjusted their water management practices to help adapt to the changing climate and their ever-changing water needs.



Attendees network during a break between seminars.



Attendees enjoy lunch before heading out on tours.

The morning seminars touched on several practices and how they've been implemented in the work place. The presentations were brought to us by several individuals in all aspects of the industry and covered topics such as acid injection systems, evapotranspiration and recapture ponds. The speakers discussed how they carried out

these changes and how they overcame the challenges associated with improving crop quality while reducing costs. Before lunch guest speaker Lindsay Day of Saunders Brother's Nursery additionally brought to our attention their preventative measures taken against Boxwood Blight, a serious Boxwood fungal disease that has become

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Brian Sipkens presents his heated irrigation system.

more prevalent in the northern states. At this time there is no cure, but there are many preventative measures that growers can take.

Following lunch, the tours started at **Sipkens Nurseries** a family-owned and operated nursery and garden centre specializing in perennials for the wholesale market. Attendees looked at production firsthand and toured both the perennial greenhouses and the garden centre. Currently Sipkens relies on heated water in

their greenhouse to help wake dormant plants during cooler weather with great success.

The second tour stop was to **Roelands Plant Farms Inc** where attendees witnessed a state of the art vegetable propagation facility. Having expanded to twelve acres of enclosed greenhouse space, Roelands offers a high standard of hygiene and optimum growing conditions via UV



Cucumbers getting ready to ship.

sterilization of irrigation water, infloor heating, flood floors and height adjustable grow pipes.

Biosecurity is also of major importance to help prevent contamination of their peppers, cucumbers and grafted tomatoes.



Guests dress in biosecurity suits to tour Roelands' state of the art facility.

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Attendees follow Ben Hillen on a guided tour.



Ben Hillen addresses questions regarding his potting machine.

The final tour stop was to **Hillen Nursery Inc.**, a family owned and operated nursery since 1983. Hillen's production includes, ornamental grasses, vines, evergreens, perennials, flowering shrubs and container grown ornamental and shade trees. Once there, guests had the privilege to tour themselves around the impressive 300-acre site or follow a guided tour. Additionally, Hillen's equipment was on display for attendees to take a closer look at. This included their new potting machine and some of the other equipment that play important roles in their production.

Thanks to the many generous sponsors of this successful event: Gro-Bark Ontario Ltd., Hillen Nursery, Fafard, Kam's Grower Supply,

Plant Products, Profile Products, ICI Specialty Fertilizers, ACROBATIC Controls, Inc., Bloom 'n Nursery, Haviland Plastic Products and Landscape Ontario. Thanks to the dedicated IPPS members who organized this meeting: Keith Osborne, Stephanie West, Bart Brusse and Brian Sipkens!