

Newark Conference Tour: Monday September 24, 2018

By Maddie Maynor

After Maryland's delightful preconference tours on Sunday, we started Monday's tours with a trip northeast to New Jersey. The first stop was Centerton Nursery, where cutting edge innovation has kept them growing strong for 44 years. The Blew family and staff toured the groups around the nursery, highlighting impressive custom built equipment that was made in-house. With over 2.4 million square feet of cold frames, 45,000 square feet of propagation, and 20,000 square feet of heated vegetable production, there was much to see. Some of the highlights were one-of-a-kind trimming machines, mobile production lines and efficient sticking lines outfitted with Visser automated equipment in action. After a quick but informative tour with our friends at Centerton Nursery, we boarded the bus and made our way to the next stop, Overdevest Nurseries.



Sticking cuttings at Centerton Nursery. Rice hulls applied for weed prevention.



Centerton Nursery was a marvel of mechanical efficiency.



Perennial potting operation at Centerton Nursery.

When we arrived at Overdevest, we were greeted with snacks and a hayride around the farm. The tour started with a brief history of the 290-acre nursery, which began in 1952 and specializes in azaleas, rhododendrons, dogwoods, and Japanese maples. Since then, Overdevest has built a reputation of providing the highest quality, uniform plant material for independent garden centers. During the hayride, staff members detailed their environmentally-conscious growing practices, such as recycling irrigation water and using renewable potting substrates. The wagon ride toured through the production building (avoiding the rain) and shipping yard, where Overdevest team members discussed lean flow practices implemented to keep up with demand.



Owner Ed Overdevest (R) and his Shipping Manager explaining their custom designed cart.



Efficient conveyor pruning method used at Overdevest Nursery.



Hay wagons ready to tour us through Overdevest Nursery. As you can see, rain gear was needed.

From Overdevest, the buses made their way through New Jersey farmland for our final stop of the day at Rivendell Nursery in Greenwich. Rivendell family and staff welcomed our arrival with a lovely spread of charcuterie, raw oysters and libations. Guests were encouraged to meander around the grounds to see some of the specialized B&B trees and shrubs. We saw the propagation greenhouse where 60% of Rivendell's offering are produced on site.

The long but education-packed day came to a close at Rivendell with a fabulous BBQ dinner and homemade desserts with everyone mingling and discussing the day's activities. Thanks to Ted Kiefer and his staff for welcoming us so generously and lavishly! In true IPPS tradition, the night closed with a live auction of donated rare and unusual plants with the money raised going to support the IPPS Eastern Region. With full minds and bellies, the groups loaded the buses and made their way back to Delaware for some shut eye before another great day of IPPS education and tours!



Ted Kiefer (right) of Rivendell Nursery and Clive Larkman (left) from Australia talking plants at the banquet.



The 2 Brians – Decker(left) & Maynard (center), with Local Site Committee Chair Steve Castorani (right) enticing us to buy a unique plant at the auction.