

The Internet and How It Applies to the Nursery Industry

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THE WEB

The backbone of the world wide WEB is the Web Page which is constructed using hypertext markup language (HTML). The words, graphics, and sound that are transmitted on the WEB is defined using HTML. One of the keys in making this easy to use is the ability of the user to move from one page to another by "pointing and clicking" with the computer cursor. This hypertext link allows the user to move from one document to another without knowing where that next document resides. Therefore, a user could be reading a growers catalogue written by a nursery in Oregon and reference an article on Plant Trial Tests published by the Auburn University in Alabama. The illustration below is the home page for the BoShanCee Nursery WEB site. Presently, our site contains nine pages of text. We have taken 35 mm pictures of our plant material for sale this season and are adding them to our site so that our customers can see a picture of the plant they are considering purchasing.

The BoShanCee Homepage
 Welcome to BoShanCee Nursery
"Wholesale growers of field grown, broadleaf evergreens"
 214 County Lake Road
 New Market, Alabama 35761
 Fax: 205-536-6913
 Phone: 205-379-3826
 E-mail: boshancee@compuserve.com
 Web: <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/BOSHANCEE>
 1996/97 Wholesale Price List

-barberry	-boxwood
-hinoki false cypress	-dogwood
-euonymus	-holly
-magnolia	-nandina
-laurel	-hemlock

Company History
 Growing Philosophy for Specimen Plant Material
 Terms and Conditions
 Order Placement

BROWSERS

The software program that resides on your computer and establishes the interface with the WEB is called a "browser". Netscape and the Microsoft's Internet Explorer are the two most common WEB browsers. Actually, there are over 26 different browsers available on the market today. Using a browser, one can access the WEB

and visit many different WEB sites around the world. This is known a “surfing the WEB”.

Individual users are not connected directly to the Internet. Instead, they are connected to an Internet Service Provider (ISP) via telephone lines which are connected to the Internet. The ISP charges for the time that an individual is connected. This charge usually runs from \$9.95 to \$30.00 per month. I recommend selecting a local ISP in your city which offers unlimited access to the Internet. The monthly charge is around \$20. Except for this monthly expense and your personal time, there are usually no additional costs for being on the WEB.

HOW CAN YOU USE THE WEB

There are three things that are needed in order to use the WEB:

- Equipment
- Internet service provider (ISP)
- The name of a webpage to access

The equipment needed is a computer, a modem, a telephone line, and browser software. Any computer will do so long as it can run the browser software. In order to minimize problems, I recommend a computer with an Intel 486 chip or better. There are many modems to chose from, but select a modem with a minimum speed of 28.8 baud. Slower modems will take minutes not seconds to display many webpages and are very ineffective in utilizing the WEB. WEB usage on your existing telephone line can interfere with incoming business phone calls. A second telephone line is desirable, but the cost must be considered. I recommend staying with your existing line but installing a second line if it can be justified. Either Netscape Navigator or the Internet Explorer browser software are excellent and can be purchased from your local computer store.

In selecting a Internet Service Provider (ISP), you can choose a local company which can be accessed by a local phone number (thus eliminating long distance charges) or a national service provider who can be accessed by an “800” phone number. Costs between the two are about the same. I use CompuServe (American On-Line is also available) because for \$9.95 a month it offers many additional services and provides a **free** home for the BoShanCee Nursery Website.

Once you are connected, you need to point your browser to a homepage. Homepage names are showing up everywhere — magazines, brochures, advertisements, television programs, etc., see the attached list. Start building a library of names (“bookmarking”) for those whom you do business with. The WEB offers a very powerful search capability which helps you find homepages for subjects of interest. This software, known as search engines, is available free of charge on the WEB. In response to your defined keywords, it will provide you the Web Page names that contain information about the subject material.

HOW DOES BOSHANCEE NURSERY USE THE WEB?

The nursery publishes its product brochure along with plant photographs and current availability. We also include technical information about our plants and our own personal observations learned while growing the plants. The information is updated monthly. An advantage of the WEB is its accessibility 24 h a day: i.e., a landscape contractor client can reference our plant availability via the WEB at home or in the office during the evening. A landscape design can then be developed in the

evening and presented to their customer in the morning with detailed technical information and pictures of the actual plants. Our landscape contractor and retail nursery clients can also place orders while they are looking at the brochure. This order is sent by e-mail and a confirmation is returned the same way.

Twoway communication with the chemical manufacturers enable our nursery to obtain current information on chemicals we use. Any queries of chemical usage problems we may encounter are sent directly to the manufacturer — and they quickly respond to us.

The quantity of horticultural information available from educational and research institutes is significant. Access to this information will be an important benefit to our nursery in the future.

THE FUTURE OF THE WEB

In just a few years the cellular telephone became an integral part of our daily lives. The use of the WEB will take a little longer. It involves computers, which is still a stumbling block for many potential users. Based on the present usage of computers by our customer base, our nursery can not justify spending much more in time and dollars than we currently do. I believe this will change in the near future. Televisions are now being sold with an internet channel. The user will sit in his arm chair and communicate with the WEB through the TV screen — without the hassle of working a computer or dealing with a telephone line. As the technology becomes easier and cheaper to use, more of our customers will come on-line. Someday you will be able to vote, engage in interactive entertainment and education, receive customized news, buy products, talk to others with real-time pictures—all from the comfort of your home or office.

URL ADDRESSES

Some selected URL addresses which are useful and interesting to view are listed below:

- <http://www.cstone.net/plants/>
- <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/BOSHANCEE>
- <http://www.agr.state.tx.us/tame/fxg/1342.htm>
- <http://www.hardie.com/homepage.html>
- <http://www.vngw.com/>
- <http://www.hort.purdue.edu/ext/conhort.html>
- <http://www.teleport.com/confir/>
- <http://www.ahandyguide.com/catl/n/n17.html>
- <http://www.growzone.org/>
- <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu>

For looking up nurseries, the best index I've found to date is: <http://www.ahandyguide.com/catl/n/n17.html>. Generally it is hard to locate nursery growers, since so few have submitted their URLs to the popular search engines. I have stumbled onto most of my contacts by surfing the Net, which can take a lot of time. Easier and faster ways to search for specific information need to be devised.

GETTING INFORMED

Now is a good time to become informed. There are many magazines and books available on the subject. Get with friends who can show you the capabilities

available. Become comfortable with the idea. Then you can decide for yourself if and when this technology will benefit your company. A quick way to find and purchase publications about the WWW and other related subject areas is to get on line and search the homepage of Amazon.com books — i.e. <http://www.amazon.com>.

SOME SELECTED REFERENCES TO CONSIDER

Levine, J.R and **C. Barodui**. 1996. The internet for dummies. IDG Books, Inc. (very technical and detailed, but thorough; this book is for those who want to know how the internet works).

Ellsworth, J.H. and **M.V. Ellsworth**. 1996. Marketing on the Internet. John Wiley & Sons. (A good reference for those who use the WEB for business).

Pfaffenberger, B. 1995. The world wide web bible. (A good overview with lots of web pages to search).

Hahn, H. and **R. Stout**. 1995. The internet yellow pages. McGraw-Hill, Inc. (an index of web pages, URL's, descriptions, etc.; good for those who want to find something particular on the WEB).