

Technical Sessions of the International Plant Propagators' Society – Southern Region of North America (SRNA) Annual Meeting – Presidential Address

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Summary

The 48th Annual Meeting (49th year) of the International Plant Propagators' Society-Southern Region of North America (SRNA)

convened at 8:00 am on 28 October 2024 at the Hyatt Regency Tulsa, Oklahoma with President Cheryl R. Boyer presiding.

INTRODUCTION

President Boyer welcomed everyone to Tulsa, Oklahoma for the 48th Annual Meeting of the SRNA. Many of you know me, but for those who do not, I want to take a

moment to share my background and why I am here as someone who lives and works in Kansas (part of the IPPS-Eastern Region of North America). First, I was born and raised

in Oklahoma. In 2003, I earned a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture from Oklahoma State University, followed by a Master of Science in Horticulture focusing on nursery crop production (2005). My thesis advisor was Dr. Janet Cole and I conducted field research in Park Hill at Greenleaf Nursery where we toured yesterday.

I had the tremendous opportunity to conduct doctoral research in alternative substrates for nursery crop production at Auburn University under the guidance of Drs. Charles Gilliam and Glenn Fain, graduating in 2008. I will never forget that first October being told to pack a bag and get in the van—we were going to an IPPS conference. That year (2005) the meeting was in Gainesville, Florida and I was able to meet growers, tour outstanding nurseries, and watch my fellow graduate students compete in the student competition. The next year, I was on that stage! Since then, I have only missed the IPPS conference during the years my two children were born and the first post-COVID event when I was still unable to travel. I even had the privilege of helping deliver the 2020 IPPS North American Summit to a global audience—what a thrill!

The IPPS student competitions gave me confidence and a connection to people who wanted to learn from and use the research I conducted. I will never forget Charlie Parkerson asking me challenging questions and thinking through implementation at his nursery, Lancaster Farms. I also learned so much from Dr. Mack Thetford, who led the student competition and Dr. Fred Davies who edited my writing for the proceedings. What an unprecedented opportunity to learn from and live life with people who have fundamentally changed what and how plants are produced. Look

around you—we are surrounded by Legends!

IPPS is addictive! We care for one another. We share with each other. We change the world together. IPPS is also unique with an industry/academic mix—it doesn't work without the mix. Academics like me are here to serve industry—we need to know how to help and here at IPPS we get to talk shop with you, brainstorm, and fine-tune ideas. I'm excited to hand the baton to 1st Vice President Michael Roe of Windmill Nursery and see him carry forward the projects we have been working on as an Executive Committee. Our partnership over this last year has been remarkable with our strengths alternating to lead our organization well. It's that mix of industry and academic that makes us click, makes us work, and makes us relevant. I'm grateful for the opportunity to serve you.

If you are wondering why I work for Kansas State University after having spent my life and earned an education in the Southern Region, it's very simple—they offered me a job in 2008 just before the economic recession hit! My appointment is 75% Extension, 25% Research in nursery crop production and marketing, but I do lots of other work in the horticulture Extension and research world. I have come to know and love the great state of Kansas and I am proud to work for the nation's first operational land-grant institution, opening in 1863. The work I do is national and international in scope and you all are a major influence in the projects I work on and the Extension products I produce. If it helps IPPS members, it helps Kansas stakeholders, too.

I want to show you a video created by Kansas State University about what it

means to be a next-generation land-grant university (**Fig. 1**).



Figure 1. The land-grant university system of teaching, research and extension at Kansas State University.

<https://youtu.be/jfs9jPXdZZo>

This story is similar in every one of our states. This one is about Kansas, but you can insert your state's land-grant university and the story is still true. Those who came before us walked a different road with different challenges, but their goal was the same--a better life.

The land-grant idea inspires me every day.

- **Teaching:** Learning to think critically, collaborate, and focus on research-based choices.
- **Research:** Innovation and increasing what we know to be true. Generating knowledge.
- **Extension:** Taking that knowledge out to the people who need it to make a difference in their world. We do that through meaningful learning experiences that result in behavior change.

Why do I continue to engage with IPPS Southern Region? Because the mission is the same: "To seek and to share". From Florida to California, Minnesota to Texas, and right in the heartland...the mis-

sion is to grow our great nation (and by association, the world) by helping our people find community, build lives and livelihoods, and make better choices...TOGETHER.

Every one of us will leave this IPPS conference with an idea and many will implement that idea—we will have changed TOGETHER. We will have made our industry and our lives better TOGETHER. This week we have the FREEDOM and the JOY to seek and to share TOGETHER. Let's get to it!

President Boyer had the dual challenge of serving as both President and Local Site Chair (while located 250-miles from Tulsa). She thanked her Local Site Committee: Paul Havenar, Mark West, Dustin Stoll, Bruce Dunn, Alicia Torres and Todd Lasseigne. She also recognized Holly Dobbs of Oklahoma State University for managing the Silent Auction.

The SRNA remains financially strong, with the due diligence of Sec-Tres, Donna Foster. There are 259 active/paying members, including 30 new members for 2024. For the past 10-years the annual membership has averaged 243 – so there is controlled growth.

Boyer thanked the Executive Committee, and the Sponsorship Committee: Chair, Dr. Anthony Witcher, Boyer, Jeremy Pickens, and Richard May - who raised \$42,000, which is outstanding! Boyer encouraged the membership to thank, visit and show their support of our sponsors during the meeting. The SRNA is deeply indebted to our loyal sponsors who make our annual meeting financially possible. She encouraged all members to make new members and first-time attendees feel welcome — share with them and seek from them.

Boyer announced that the SRNA is in its seventh year of the Southern Region Educational Endowment, with a base donation of \$20,000 from an anonymous donor. The Education Endowment balance is now at \$153,965 – and growing. It will greatly enhance our region's ability to support students and early career professionals – and ensure continued quality of the outstanding educational, out-reach programs our region is known for. All of this year's contributions to the silent and live auction are to go to the Endowment Fund – so please contribute! She thanked Kevin Gantt for leading the endowment effort.

The SRNA currently supports 5-scholarship programs – that cost around \$20,000 per year. This includes: Vivian Munday Young Horticultural Research Scholarship Work Program, Charles Student Research Competition, Early-Career Exchange Program, Margie Jenkins Industry Scholarship, and Vince Dooley Scholarship.

Four years ago - the IPPS-SR initiated the **Margie Jenkins Industry Scholarship** to support industry professionals attending our conference for the 1st time. Margie Jenkins had a major impact on the Louisiana Nursery industry with her plant selections. Boyer recognized this year's recipient: Christina Reid of Texas A&M University. She recognized the 2024 Vince Dooley scholarship recipient: Teagan Young, University of Florida. Coach Dooley was a big proponent of landscape horticulture, taking a plant materials course with Dr. Michael Dirr at the University of Georgia – and developing great interest in new landscape plant selections.

For the **Early-Career Exchange Program** between the SRNA and the European Region, Max McKeown, Mobile Botanical Garden, represented the Southern Region at the European Conference and toured the European nursery industry. This is a wonderful exchange program for an early career professional to go to Europe and visit the European Region.

This is the thirteenth year the SRNA is doing the **Vivian Munday Young Horticultural Professional Scholarship Work Program** (formerly Vivian Munday Scholarship). She introduced the four interns: Katelyn Raffler- Moody Gardens; Hayden Lee- Stephen F. Austin State University; Tanner Hamerling - University of Georgia; and Kayla Morrison Oklahoma State University. These young professionals are making a strong contribution to this year's program. Boyer remarked that our future is young people!

At the 2024 mid-year board meeting in Orlando, Florida – the SRNA board had strategic planning session. In 2025, the board will be presenting a 5-year strategic plan for the SRNA – with metrics.

Boyer encouraged the membership to fill out questions for the Question Box – and attend the Tuesday night Question Box/Ice Cream Social. The Question Box was to be moderated by Christopher Brown and Matt Nagel.

Boyer thanked Program Chair and 1st Vice-President, Michael Roe for the excellent program and incredible group of speakers he assembled!

PROGRAM CHAIR, MICHAEL ROE

Program Chair Roe welcomed all members, guests and students. He acknowledged President Boyer for her leadership and very capably serving as both President and Local Site Chair. He thanked the membership for the opportunity to serve them, and then reviewed the scheduled program. There were

six outstanding paper submissions for the Charles Student Research Competition. There will be four students competing in the oral competition, and poster presentations for the membership to visit with student presenters during the meeting. The first speaker of the technical session was Dr. Jeb Fields of Louisiana State University Agriculture Center.



Figure 1. President Dr. Cheryl Boyer (right) with Michael Roe (left), Program Chair of the 2024 Tulsa, Oklahoma, 48th annual conference.