



McAdams Consulting, Inc.

Insect and Disease Problems of Landscape Plants

P.O. Box 125
Swisher, Iowa 52338-0125
(319) 857-4075

E-mail: wrmcadams@aol.com

Does Quality Really Matter Anymore??

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The last few years have been nothing short of brutal for the nursery industry. During all of my years of working with Illinois nursery growers and landscapers, I have never experienced any economy which has been nearly as severe as this current crisis. As prospective buyers call area growers and ask for plant availabilities, the growers are confronted with “grow it” and “sell it” pricing comparisons, which are completely irrespective of any of the basic attributes of plant quality. As area growers try to survive the current economic climate, the question is beginning to arise, “Does quality really matter anymore?”

Should we worry about branch structures? Should we worry if trees have good central leaders? Should we worry about the condition of the root systems? Should we care if insects and diseases are present? We ALL know the correct answers.

Chicago area growers are highly respected as having some of, if not the best, plant quality in the country. This reputation was “not” just superficially credited but it was “earned” through decades of “consistent” hard work, dedication, and professionalism. So with the current economic crisis should growers succumb to “grow it” and “sell it” pricing? Do the cheapest trees on the market really constitute the best value?

I don't think so. Each shipment of plants which are loaded out is a testimony of a grower's reputation. Recession or not, like it or not, that reputation will stick. However, it is ALSO true, that each plant installation of a prospective job site is a testimony of landscaper's professionalism. If substandard plants are installed, there is a much higher likelihood of plant decline, not to mention additional maintenance issues and costs. Do plantings enhance a property or do they become an eyesore as they progressively dilapidate? Do you think the clients notice? And if so, do you think that reputation might stick with the company that performed the installation?

Quality plants “do” cost more but that is because they have “much” more to offer. However, in order for a grower to provide the basic attributes of quality, there are additional costs that they must endure. Are they worth it? Visit a few job sites a few years after installation and ask the clients. They sure will give you the answer. Have you ever had to visit a job site a few years after a poor installation and listen to the client rant about the poor plant quality?

Yes, plant quality “does” matter.

William R. McAdams
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