

Sunbelt Ag Expo: Quite an Educational Experience

Lenny Rogers, North Carolina State University

Attending the Sunbelt Ag Expo was quite an educational experience. My first stop in the gate was to stop by the office and chat with Chip Blalock the Executive Director of the Sun Belt Ag Expo. During the next two days I visited many educational booths, sessions and exhibits. There were hundreds or probably thousands of agriculture supply/equipment booths, various University buildings and much more. Many of these were very helpful and informative as I made business contacts as well. I'll now list four or so of my most educational experiences there.



First of all the TeeJet booth and spray nozzle display was quite impressive. It showed spray patterns of many different nozzles such as flat fan (with and without air induction), turbo induction nozzles and many more. Coverage of surfaces and spray drift was demonstrated with fans and at different pressures. This was very eye opening and helpful to me and my future pesticide education with growers.

Another educational exhibit and class I attended was that on vegetable aquaponics. Various types of aquaponics systems were set up and functioning with fish bio-solids providing a nutrient source to the various vegetables and production systems. During the instructional class the Auburn specialist spoke on types of systems, vegetables best utilizing this system, packaging and food safety issues when dealing with produce from these systems.

Another great session I attended was that of Aquatic Weed Management. The instructor from Edge's Aquatic Services spoke on pond management. The importance of testing pH and alkalinity in ponds before treating with herbicides for various weed problems. He spoke on the importance of liming ponds, on the problems encountered when fertilizing ponds, proper methods of treating algae and also on specific treatment of various pond weed problems. He spoke on biological control with diploid grass carp and chemical herbicide treatments. He also gave us some good University web sites for pond weed ID. After the class, he then helped me devise a treatment plan for a watermeal problem in one of my client's ponds here in my home county. This plan consists of using the aquatic herbicide, Sonar, utilized at appropriate rates. Followed up by the addition of approximately 17 diploid grass carp beginning at the 8-9 inch length.

Another educational site at the Expo was the horticulture garden site. Here displayed growing were various varieties of rows of cabbages, broccoli, parsley, spring lettuce mixes, corn and several other vegetables. These were all displayed



under a state of the art drip irrigation system. Also displayed here were various raised bed garden structures for consideration.

The Sunbelt Expo provided a great opportunity to network and visit with fellow NACAA members from Georgia, Florida, Tennessee and Alabama. The Georgia Association of County Agricultural Agents have an impressive food stand that they use as a major fundraiser for their association.

All in all, attending the Sunbelt Ag Expo was much larger and more informational than I had imagined. What an experience! I hope to be able to attend it again one day.