

California Association of Nurseries and Garden Centers

LEGISLATIVE SNAPSHOT

Monthly Legislative & Regulatory Report



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UPCOMING EVENTS

March 20

CANGC Board Meeting

All Members Invited
Sacramento, CA

June 17-19

CANGC Legislative Conference and Annual Meeting

Agenda Being Confirmed
Call now for information on
reservations at Embassy Suites
Sacramento, CA

June 23

CANGC Board Meeting

Conference Call

July 15-20

ANLA Annual Convention

Boston, MA

\$5 MILLION APPROVED FOR NURSERIES •

The federal Office of Management and Budget approved \$5 million to be utilized as a cost share with nurseries to aid in the fight against the spread of the Glassy-winged Sharpshooter (GWSS). This effort started last year when Governor Gray Davis and California Department of Food and Agriculture Secretary Bill Lyons personally sent requests to the California Congressional delegation requesting aid for nurseries after realizing the enormity of the burden incurred by nurseries to stop the artificial spread of GWSS.

Bolstered by the request, Washington-based lobby firm of Thelen, Reid and Priest was retained with the lead advocate being Tom O'Brien. The Nursery Growers Association and individual contributions by Southern California based nurseries funded the effort. Aiding in the effort were visits by nursery industry representatives from NGA, CANGC and ANLA to key members of Congress and USDA, as reported before.

With the big hurdle of federal approval crossed, the focus now becomes the process of distributing the funds in a fair and equitable manner to those that have incurred costs in the GWSS battle. The details of this will be hammered out through committees established by CDFR with input from the nursery industry.

STATE BUDGET THREATENS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION •

With an unprecedented state budget deficit looming, proposals for cutting costs and raising taxes abound in the state Capitol. One of the more disturbing proposals is to cut the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) budget by 30 percent. The UCCE service provides the many farm advisors and specialists that make the connection between achievements in research to actual application in the real world. The nursery industry relies heavily on UCCE for support in many production and environmental compliance endeavors.

The cuts would mean that offices and facilities would close, personnel would be laid off and key Extension programs and research would be eliminated. Also, the network of county-based advisors would be decimated, severely impacting the ability to respond to exotic pests and disease. These advisors have been particularly helpful to the nursery industry in recent years responding to the many pest problems we have incurred.

You can help. To make your support of UCCE known, write your assembly member and state senator. If you do not know who they are, it is easy enough to find out on the Internet. Go to www.assembly.ca.gov. On the menu on the left side of the screen click on the link called *Find My District*. It will then ask for your zip code. By entering your zip code it will list your state senator and your assembly member and their addresses. Send a letter to their Sacramento address. In some cases it may list more than one. In that case, play it safe and send letters to all addresses listed.

DECIDUOUS GROWERS TO CONTINUE PROGRAM •

The Fruit Tree, Nut Tree Grapevine Improvement Advisory Board (IAB) authorization will end January 1, 2004 unless Assembly Bill 248 is approved this year. The IAB program assesses a one percent fee on the sale of fruit trees, nut trees and grapevines to fund research projects important to the industry and the Foundation Plant Materials Service (FPMS) at U.C. Davis. The FPMS is the program where most bud wood obtained by nurseries comes from with the goal that trees and vines purchased by customers are free of disease and are true to type and variety.

CANGC is the sponsor of Assembly Bill 248 (Nunez). Many individual nurseries, agricultural organizations and the University of California are expected to be listed in support. The bill would reauthorize the program for another ten years. The ten-year sunset is a stopgap provision to evaluate performance and to assure industry needs are still being served. AB 248 is set for its first hearing March 26 in the Assembly Agriculture Committee.

LEGISLATION TO ADDRESS LANDSCAPE WATER CONSERVATION •

This year's landscape water conservation bill is Senate Bill 312 (Machado). Following on the heels of last year's bill authored by Assembly Member Fran Pavely, which was dropped part way through the year, SB 312 seems to be taking a different approach.

SB 312, as introduced, contains mere intent language that states laudable goals and is language almost anyone could support. The "devil is in the details" as they say and an advance outline of the sponsors' goals causes concern. We will closely monitor and engage in debate on this issue. Stay tuned.