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During my undergraduate tenure at the University of Cincinnati, I had the opportunity to work in the plant division at the Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden's Center for the Research of Endangered Wildlife. While there I reaffirmed my commitment to focus my educational and professional career efforts in the area of plant systems management and environmental stewardship. My experience working in the greenhouses and laboratories associated with the research center led to my decision to pursue an education in the University of Florida's Doctor of Plant Medicine Program. Learning from the experiences of the graduate students and post-doctoral research associates pursuing careers in Botany and Ecology I came to understand that



cutbacks in academia, knowledge gaps between the private industry and academia, and the growing requirement for specialized applied training for post-graduate job placement is a reality. The decision to apply for the D.P.M. program seemed self-evident.



**Dr. Camerino and a Superintendent discuss the results of a fungicide evaluation trial conducted on a 'Champions' ultra dwarf putting green at Champions Golf Club in Houston, Texas.**

As a county commercial horticulture agent in Houston, Texas it is my responsibility to provide educational opportunities that result in the adoption of research-based practices that will protect the environment, increase worker wellbeing, and maintain profitability (or hopefully increase it). The most important aspect of my position is to establish positive productive relationships that result in educational efforts that meet the needs of the "Green Industry" (businesses involved in the production, distribution and services associated with

ornamental plants, turfgrass, landscape and garden supplies and equipment). Put another way, I work to advance the sustainability of the "Green Industry" through voluntary participation by non-degree seeking learners at a pace set by the circumstances of their situation. As an extension agent, I build capacity, set benchmarks, and advocate for the continued improvement of the local "Green Industry."

Houston is located in Harris County, Texas which is the nation's third most populous county. It is estimated that the population of Houston will surpass Chicago, ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> among US cities, in the next few years. Texas ranks third nationally, following only California and Florida, in terms of the economic value of the "Green Industry." Regarding sales, the Houston-area is also the single largest "Green Industry" region in Texas representing over \$2.5 billion in annual sales activity.



**Mr. Jeff Meckler, Building Developer, and Dr. Camerino discuss rainwater harvesting for landscape irrigation as a water conservation technique with City of Houston building code officials.**

Given the urban setting of Harris County, most of my clientele are landscape service providers. Landscape service providers include golf course superintendents, pest control operators, arborists, landscape designers, and landscape maintenance professionals. My responsibilities include organizing education workshops and field days, providing instruction at educational events, answering questions from clientele, holding planning meetings with stakeholder groups, writing educational articles, conducting literature reviews for

specific problems, and collaborating with Extension Specialists on applied research projects. As a county agent one must be able to develop creative practical solutions, integrate information from a range of academic disciplines, work with industry and regulatory groups, and develop educational methods. For more information about the commercial horticulture program of Texas AgriLife Extension Service in Harris County, Texas visit: <http://harris-tx.tamu.edu/hort/comevent.htm>.

The University of Florida's Doctor of Plant Medicine Program not only provides the practical skills needed for the professional plant health practitioner, but also develops the skill set needed for problem solving, information management, and technology utilization.



**Mr. Paul Johnson, of the Texas Forest Service, demonstrates the proper use of an air spade at the 2009 Healthy Tree Conference. The tool is used to carefully and safely remove soil from a tree's root system to permit inspection for structural root defects and root decay. The education event is a collaborative effort between the Texas AgriLife Extension Service – Harris County Office, the Texas Forest Service, and the Houston Area Urban Forestry Council.**