

Green Galore!

Behind-the-Scenes Look at a Tree Sale

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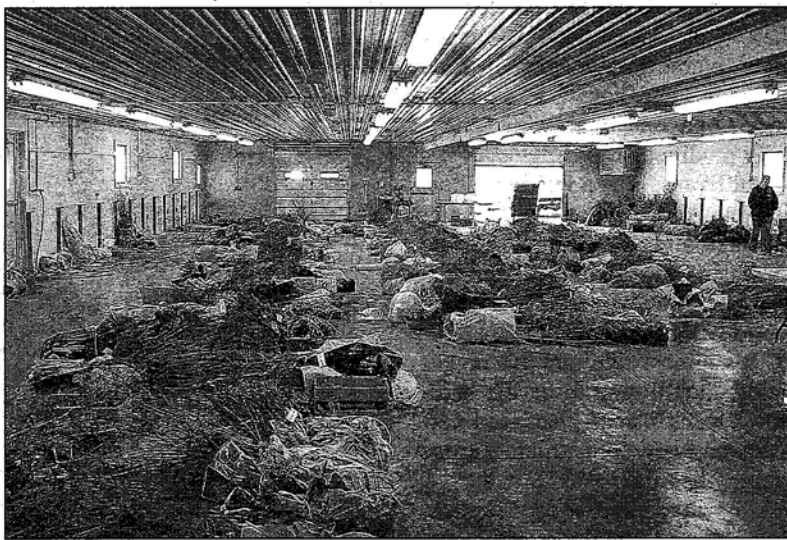
LEBANON, Pa. — “Going Green” is a buzzword you hear a lot these days, as our world starts to become more conscious of its environmental concerns.

In China, where air quality has suddenly become a major issue for the upcoming 2008 Summer Olympic Games, the government has frantically been planting trees to help curb some of the pollution in Beijing. Closer to home, many Pennsylvania Conservation Districts have been holding their annual spring tree sales to increase the amount of Keystone State greenery for both aesthetic and environmental reasons.

The Lebanon County Conservation District just completed its biggest tree and plant sale ever. Volunteers from the district’s staff and board, as well as from several local colleges, were kept busy filling almost 350 orders for this year’s sale — about 100 more orders than last year.

Wednesday, April 16 was pick-up day, when the purchasers of all those orders descended on one of the livestock barns at the Lebanon Area Fairgrounds to pick up their trees shrubs and plants — 6,750 trees, 1,400 perennials and 70 flats of ground cover plants, to be exact! The relative smoothness of the day’s operations belied all the advance preparation that went into the overall effort.

Assistant director of the Conservation District, Leigh Beamesderfer, began planning the event several months in advance, as she has for many years. The first step was to decide which trees and plants to offer. Leigh’s lengthy experience as a forester was combined with input from district staff members in selecting a good variety of greenery to meet the area’s needs. In addition to the traditional evergreens and hardwoods, Beamesderfer chose a number of bushes, flowering trees and plants that would be marketable to the many new homes springing up in developments all over the county. Her hunches proved correct, as flowering dogwoods, forsythia, winterberry holly and greenmound junipers proved to be especially popular commodities, as were the myrtle and pachysandra ground covers and perennial flowers such as black-eyed Susans, bee balm, Arizona sun blanket and English lavender.



This line-up of trees and shrubs awaiting their new owners transforms the Lebanon Area Fairgrounds hog barn into a “greenhouse” for two days.

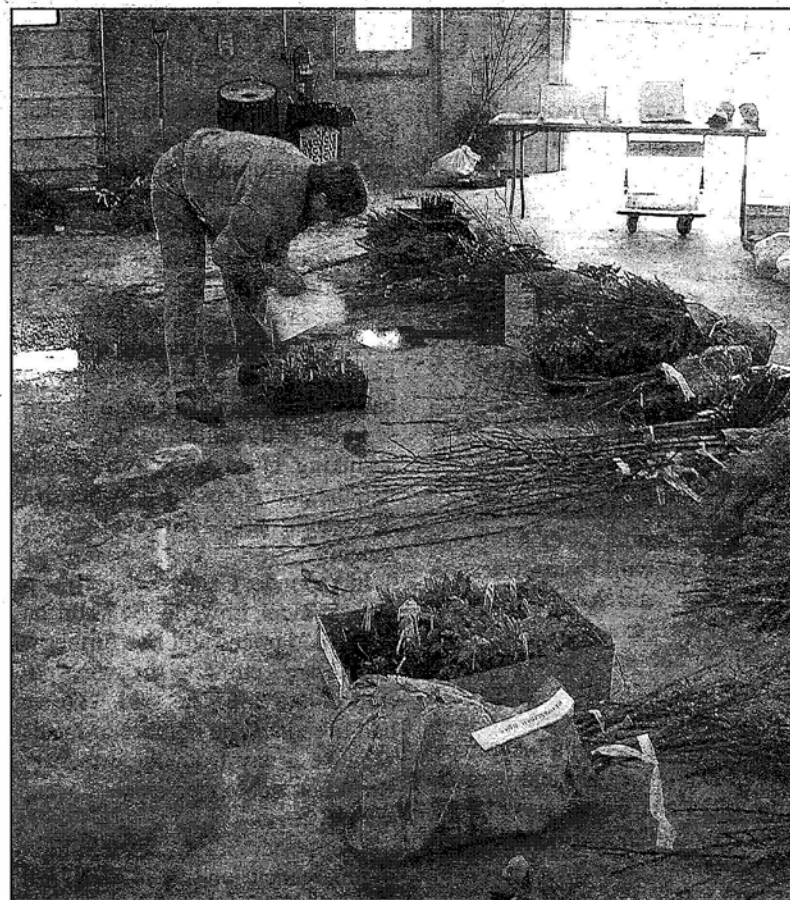
The district tries to emphasize native trees and plants. It buys the potted plants and bare root seedlings from nurseries in Lancaster, Indiana, Adams, York and Union counties.

With all the trees and shrubs delivered from the nurseries to the Fairgrounds’ hog barn, April 15 became the big day to “get it all together”. A total of 20 helpers in warm old clothes gathered to begin a big game of “pick-up sticks”, where all the game pieces were “green,” and the object was to assemble orders as quickly and accurately as possible! Large bundles of seedlings were arranged around the perimeter of the warehouse-like barn — six kinds of evergreens at one end wrapping around into the 10 varieties of hardwood trees and shrubs along the adjoining wall. Nearby were the 200 fruit trees — apple, peach and pear — that were sold in pairs. Pots and flats of perennials and ground covers took up the remaining wall space. At the far side of the room were tables containing tools of the trade: big rolls of brown wrapping paper, large balls of cord string, marking pens and various sizes of plastic shopping and garbage bags that would be used to wrap up individual orders. Nearby stood two huge tubs of treated water in which to dip roots to keep them nice and moist. Other key ingredients were a large accordion file containing all the orders in alphabetical order and pre-printed name labels to affix to the completed orders.

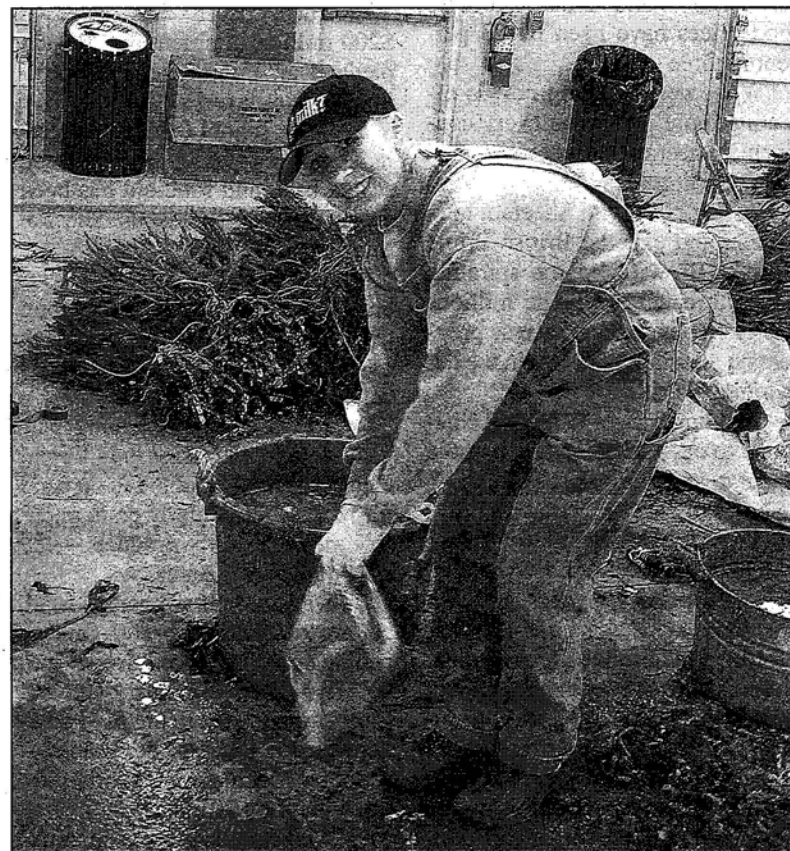
By 9:00 a.m. there were seven conservation district staffers, two district board members and assorted

students from Lebanon Valley College and Harrisburg Area Community College assembled to start the process of filling orders and arranging them in snake-like rows covering the center of the large building. Two staffers were kept busy just cutting open bundles of trees and tying color-coded ribbons to each different type of tree, so that buyers would know which was which. There was plenty of fun camaraderie as the troops began to vie for the assorted trees and shrubs and assemble them into appropriate groupings to fill each order. Sometimes there were groans, as someone would draw a large order to fill. Other times there were cries of “Help!”, when someone needed an extra hand to tie a knot or cut an extra length of string. And, of course, there were also grateful visits to the snack table, set up with coffee, doughnuts, sodas and snack foods to keep up the laborers’ strength. When noon-time rolled around, the big job was well on its way to being completed and the creaky knees and muddied hands took a break to enjoy meatball sandwiches with brownies for dessert.

By mid-afternoon, the labors for day 1 were at an end and the tired troops retired to their homes to rest up for the “main event” — pick-up day. Aside from the obvious duties of greeting customers and helping them load their orders, the three to four district staffers and a like number of LVC/HACC volunteers also assisted with calling the folks who’d forgotten to pick-up their orders, transporting unsold plants



Lebanon County Conservation District Chairman Connie Hoffer readies an order of perennials for pick-up.



LCCD’s Nutrient Management Specialist Lynette Gelsinger prepares to dunk some seedling roots into treated water before packaging.

to the district’s nearby office to sell and — finally — sweeping the hog barn and turning out the lights on yet another successful tree sale. It was a lot of work, but it was also a lot of fun — and just think how

much greener Lebanon County will become thanks to the thousands of trees and shrubs now sinking their roots into our rich soil and improving our air quality in the process!