

Comments

Tree Planters' Notes

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International Nursery and Reforestation Exchanges


I have recently returned from an exciting trip to central Siberia that was part of a Forest Service scientific exchange with a series of institutes of the Russian Academy of Science. Russia, as you know, is a huge country, with forest resources roughly 3 times the size of the United States. The Russians have a nursery industry that produces about 800 million seedlings per year-roughly half of our production. Their nursery technology is developing but could use substantial infusions of capital and expertise to optimize effectiveness.

Russia is just one of several countries that have made overtures to the USDA Forest Service for technical and financial assistance in nursery production and reforestation efforts. Some of these other countries include Mexico, Armenia, Uganda, and India. In fact, there seems to be a steady stream of foreign travelers coming to the U.S. looking for assistance. The Rio Conference on the Environment held in 1992 (UNCED) and other factors have pushed tree planting for restoration of degraded ecosystems and reforestation in general to the forefront of many governments' agendas. Representatives are coming to the United States because we have a solid reputation of having state-of-the-art nursery and reforestation technology.

This need for assistance offers many of us in the profession a terrific opportunity to help other nations in their nursery efforts, to see other cultures, and make international contacts. Going to Siberia was a rare treat for me. I know that some of you also have been active travelers and know firsthand about the rewards of helping others learn more about nursery and reforestation techniques and technology.

You may ask, "What do you do on these trips?" Well, of course, a trip can be quite varied, but typically it can involve assessing the local situation-what species are they growing, what should they be growing, etc. Then, it can be a matter of helping to determine what is the appropriate technology to use for that particular situation. (It makes no sense to recommend a technology that is outside the financial grasp of a country.) There is very often also the matter of training the local professionals on the latest state-of-the-art technology (and of course learning from them tricks to bring home to your nursery). Incidentally, we are going to be doing an extensive nursery training course in Mexico in 1994 for an entire year.

If you want to become involved in international nursery work, the International Forestry Deputy Area of the USDA Forest Service maintains a computerized skills roster to store information about individuals who have experience in or who are interested in becoming involved in international forestry work. The roster application gathers information about the applicant's areas) of expertise, overseas experience, language skills, and education, in addition to a variety of other questions. When a request by an agency or institution is made to the Forest Service for short-term technical assistance, a computerized search is made of the roster to try and match a person's skills and qualifications with the technical assistance request.



If you are interested in international forestry, with particular emphasis on nursery and reforestation technology, we want to hear from you-regardless of whether you work for public or private organizations. Call me-at (202) 205-1379- and I will send you an application form for the skills roster. Filling out the application takes only a few moments. After your application has been processed, you will then be in the database and could be considered for an international mission. Travel costs and per diem are usually covered by either the Forest Service, the receiving country, or another entity. Usually salaries are not paid, as we expect your home unit to pay for salaries with the thought that international travel is a great training device. On some occasions, however, a consultant's fee is provided. In the meantime, a good thing to do is to obtain your personal passport, as this will facilitate getting a visa later on.

I think each of us benefits from seeing other countries, for both cultural and technical enrichment. Often, we can apply and learn much about what we see in other countries to our own situation. So, I encourage you to take part in this expanding world of international nursery and reforestation exchange.

Robert Mangold

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