Designing an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Program for Hispanic Landscapers

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According to a 2005 University of Florida Nursery and Landscape Industry Economic analysis report made by John J. Haydu and Alan W. Hodges, Florida’s landscape sector installation, maintenance, and design accounts for $5.255 billion sales per year. Almost 30% ($1.582 billion) is attributed to landscape maintenance business. The use of IPM principles in Florida’s 6 million acres of land, in order to minimize pest problems and apply chemicals only when appropriate, is a key concept if we want to live in a sustainable environment. Traditionally, the majority of Extension landscape management programming and educational publications available on Integrated Pest Management (IPM) topics have been produced and directed toward an English-speaking audience. However, in Florida demographics have rapidly changed in the last 10 to 15 years and the number of Spanish-speaking landscape management companies has increased. Twenty-eight participants from 14 different companies completed the IPM training. In a telephone survey conducted 6 months after the class, participants indicated they were using the class handouts anywhere from daily to once per month with average use of once to twice a week. The survey also indicated that as a result of the training, the participants felt more confident talking to their clientele on pest-related topics.

Traditionally, the majority of Extension landscape management programs and educational publications available on Integrated Pest Management (IPM) have been geared toward an English-speaking audience. However, in Florida, in the last few decades demographics have been rapidly changing, and the numbers of Spanish-speaking landscape management companies are increasing. In Miami–Dade County approximately 60% to 80% of the landscape work force speaks Spanish, with between 14% to 20% in St. Lucie County and about 10% to 15% in Nassau and Duval counties (personal communications). For that reason, during late 2006 a group of extension educators from northern Florida (Duval and Nassau counties), central Florida (St. Lucie County), and southern Florida (Miami–Dade County) formed a team in order to develop an Integrated Pest Management program in Spanish for landscape maintenance companies. The program was funded by the UF/IFAS Integrated Pest Management Grants program.

Methods

The first step was the creation of the IPM tool kit, which contains a briefcase, hand pruner, hand-lens, latex gloves, pen, pencil, marker, sample bag, and plastic jars. It also includes reference materials translated into Spanish, such as the University of Florida card deck, Disorder and Diseases of Ornamental Palms (SP360); Helpful, Harmful or Harmless? (SP130); and Troubleshooting Lawn Pests (SP180); also a weed identification insert with the most documented weed problems in Florida landscapes; and disease, insect, and weed survey scouting sheets. All these materials were translated into Spanish with the assistance of UF specialists and county faculty. Fourteen landscape companies in three counties were selected. Due to funding and time constraints the program needed to be presented in one day. The program started in the morning with a 4-h session inside the classroom with three presentations (Figs. 1–2). The first one explained how to use the toolkit in order to familiarize people with the equipment. The second explained the general principles of IPM. The

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Fig. 1. Exercise inside the classroom.
last one focused on specific diseases and disorders of ornamental plants and grasses. The delivery of the program was enriched by numerous physical, live samples of insects and diseases. The afternoon session was outside the classroom where 10 stations were designed with live samples of insects and diseases on ornamental plants and grasses. The objective of the session was to identify and record the problem in each station using the scouting survey forms. The program finished with a vivid discussion among the participants on what they found. The session lasted for 2 h.

Results

Twenty-eight participants from 14 different companies completed the training. In a telephone survey conducted 6 months after the class, participants indicated that they were using the class handouts anywhere from daily to once per month with average use of once to twice a week. The survey also indicated that as a result of the training, the participants felt more confident talking to their clientele on pest-related topics. In the same survey, when asked if there was an interest in participating in a follow-up IPM class, participants indicated that “Yes, more knowledge is what is needed to educate customers and homeowners.” When asked if the class was of value, one student responded, “This was one of the best programs that I attended. The live insects and diseases exercise was great.” As a result of the program, the card deck Disorder and Diseases of Ornamental Palms (SP360) will be available for sale in Spanish soon.

Literature Cited

Haydu, J. and A. Hodges. 2004. The nursery and landscape industry’s impact on Florida economy. FNGLA.