

Title of project: Weed Suppressive Groundcovers

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Abstract:

Plants found to be weed suppressive through Cornell research can be used to naturally suppress weeds. These attractive plants represent a new market potential for NY greenhouse producers. We have published a color brochure and website to describe these plants and promote their use to suppress weeds. We also coordinated the establishment of demonstration gardens at several locations across the state. The recently published brochures have been well received. The increase in sales of these plants will be tracked prior to and during the two year period of this project. An analysis of the results will be conducted. The results will be shared state wide.

Justification:

Currently many gardeners are motivated to use techniques that involve less labor and fewer pesticides. The use of these weed suppressive groundcovers has the potential to help meet those needs. Research was conducted over the past five years with the intention that the plant material would be used along NY highways to reduce maintenance. However it became apparent that there would be a use for these plants in home landscapes, as well. Prior to this project there was no plan to reach New York producers and homeowners with this information.

Objectives:

This project will promote weed suppressive groundcovers both to producers, who can grow them, and the public who can use them in their landscape to suppress weeds. Any producer or retailer who grows and sells perennial plants will be able to promote these plants with the brochure and website information produced in this project. Ultimately, the New York consumers purchasing these plants will benefit from having plants that suppress weeds and from reduced herbicide use in landscapes.

Procedures:

Brochure Development: Research data on 85 plants from Long Island and Ithaca plots was screened for effectiveness in weed suppression as well as appearance. This process yielded the 14 plants that are featured in the brochure. Photographs of these plants were taken and cultural information was compiled. A graphic artist designed the brochure to have visual appeal. The brochure was posted to New York's IPM website.

Demonstration Plots: Demonstration sites of these groundcovers were established at retail establishments and public areas in Long Island, Orange County, and the Albany, Rochester, Ithaca and Buffalo areas.

Plant material was purchased in the early spring. The plants were grown to transplant size and then transplanted in June of 2007. They were visited again in October. Hand weeding and mulching was done at this time. Losses of plant materials were noted and plans made for

getting the plots looking their best when the promotion to the public begins in late spring and summer of 2008.

Results:

The brochure was printed and posted on our website in time for the Empire State Green Industry Conference in Rochester NY in November of 2007.

http://nysipm.cornell.edu/nursery_ghouse/weed_supp_grcovers.asp

The initial response from green industry professionals was positive. Requests for additional copies are being met.

The demonstration gardens were planted and the beds are becoming established. In June of 08, after these demonstration beds have grown-in, they will be used for promotion of these weeds suppressive groundcovers to the public. One groundcover plants that is featured in the brochure performed particularly well at all locations during the hot dry summer of 2007. That was 'Walker's Low' Cat Mint and weed suppression was noted within 3 weeks of planting!

Implications:

The brochure and website were well received and are just beginning to be utilized. The stage is set for promoting these plants through the demonstration gardens, website and printed brochure 2008. In early 2008 the materials will be promoted to growers through industry conferences. In June we will promote these plants to the public.