

IPPS European Exchange 2022

Erika Ramos

J Berry Nursery, 201 Private Road 5180, Grand Saline, Texas 75140, USA

erika@jberrynursery.com

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Summary

The International Plant Propagators Society-Southern Region (IPPS-SR) and IPPS-European Region support a joint Early-Career IPPS Exchange Program – reciprocally hosting and exposing new professionals to

the Green Industry in their region – and attending their annual conference. Erika Ramos of the IPPS-SR was the 2022 professional awardee – and reports on her experience touring and learning about the European Nursery Industry.

INTRODUCTION

In 2022, I was lucky enough to have been selected as the IPPS-SR International Representative to the Early-Career IPPS-SR-European Exchange Program. It has been one of the most rewarding experiences of

my life! It gave me the opportunity to meet some wonderful people and visit some amazing places. Horticulture was not a primary focus of mine while in college, but ironically, my very first job out of college

was at J Berry Nursery. Organizations like IPPS and the opportunities it provides has helped my career - and continue helping me learn and expand on my knowledge within the industry. It was neat being able to go on this trip because although horticulture is very similar across the world, the methods plants are grown and the ways they are applied in other landscapes are very different from region to region. So being able to experience this firsthand is something I will never forget.

The IPPS Europe Exchange program lasts 10-14 days and attendees can expect to be hosted by different members of IPPS Europe. While staying at each member's house, you will be shown nurseries, garden centers, or gardens in their area. In 2022, IPPS Europe took place in Bad Zwischenahn, Germany.

My journey began in London, on 5 October 2022 where I was picked up by my first host, Tim Lawrance. Tim is also the Chair of the IPPS International Board. We took a short drive just south of London to his home in Chichester, where I met his wife, Annette. After resting for a bit, we took a walk to Bosham where we saw some beautiful scenery while the tide came in for the night (**Fig. 1**).

After our walk, we stopped for a short rest at the cutest English pub, which just so happened to be my very first. We finished the first day by having a delicious homemade dinner prepared by Annette. On my second day with Tim, we visited a couple of nurseries- Hills Nursery and Walberton Nursery.



Figure 1. A dock on the Chichester Channel.

ENGLAND

Hills Nursery. Hills is a 7-acre family owned nursery that was started in 1920. Now on their 4th generation, Hills has a very good understanding of the UK market, and it shows. Their facilities were impeccably clean and organized. They use the rail system in their greenhouses to move whole sections at a time, making them very efficient. Hills is also the first nursery I had ever seen with flood irrigation, so I found it very interesting (**Fig. 2**). After Hills we drove over to Walberton which was not too far.

Walberton Nursery. Walberton Nursery was established in 1973 and is one of four nurseries that compose The Fairplants Group. Tim, having just retired from working there a few years ago, was the one showing me around as he had a very good understanding of the processes and location.



Figure 2. Floor irrigation and belt system and Hills Nursery.

Two things stood out for me at Walberton, the first was the wind barriers that had been placed across different sections of the nursery (**Fig. 3**). I had never seen that before and I found it pretty cool. Secondly, I saw that many greenhouses had a green shade cloth over the top of the poly, as opposed to the black cloth I am used to seeing (**Fig. 4**). After inquiring about using green instead of black, I was intrigued to find out it was to simulate the shade of a tree.



Figure 3. Wind barrier at Walberton.

After a long morning of driving across Chichester and lots of walking we returned to the house to have a light lunch and afternoon tea. Tim showed me his back yard which was delightful and very comfortable with its assortment of flowering plants, trees and even some veggies. After spending some time outside, I retreated to my room and took a nap for a couple of hours. I was really feeling jetlagged at this point. After the refreshing nap, we walked to downtown Chichester for dinner, where we had some authentic Indian food with some friends of Tims.

Chatsworth House. The next day it was time for me to leave. Tim dropped me off at the local train station and I was very nervous about this since I had never traveled by train before. It turned out great: the countryside was beautiful, peaceful and the ride seemed all too short. My next host was Vicky Endersby in Sheffield where I spent two days. That afternoon we took a walk and visited Sheffield's Winter Gardens which were beautiful and provided much contrast to the outside greenery. After visiting the gardens, we had a delicious dinner at The Botanist.



On my second day with Vicky, we drove to Chatsworth House and spent the majority of the day there. Upon arriving, Vicky surprised me with reservations for afternoon tea at Chatsworth. After experiencing a proper four-course English afternoon tea, I'd have to say I wish it was something I could do on a daily basis. It was so much fun (**Fig. 5a**)!

Figure 4. Green shade on some of the greenhouses at Walberton to mimic natural tree shade.

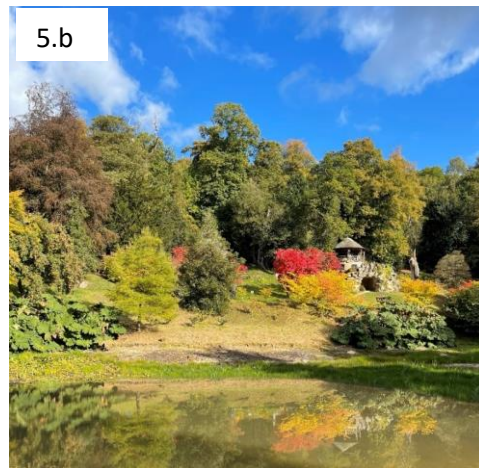


Figure 5. a.) Erika Ramos at formal British afternoon tea. **b.)** Gardens on the trail around Chatsworth House. **c.)** Yew maze in the center of the trail.

Next, we walked the Chatsworth gardens, which were so beautiful, tidy, and wild at the same time (**Fig. 5b**). We had a little fun and completed the yew maze located on the grounds (**Fig. 5c**), and finally finished off in the greenhouses which housed their tropical plants. Tired as we were that evening, Vicky asked me if I would like to go to a light show that night, and I could not say no. Matlock Bath Illuminations was a lot of fun - the illuminated and decorated boats along with the fireworks where a good way to end a very busy day.

Osberton Nursery. The next day was time to go. Before dropping me off at the train station, we stopped at Osberton Nursery, where Vicky works. Their set-up was one I was familiar with, and similar to what I work with. I did like how they set their pots in the ground which is not something I had seen before, but would become a common site in the tours to come (**Fig.6**).

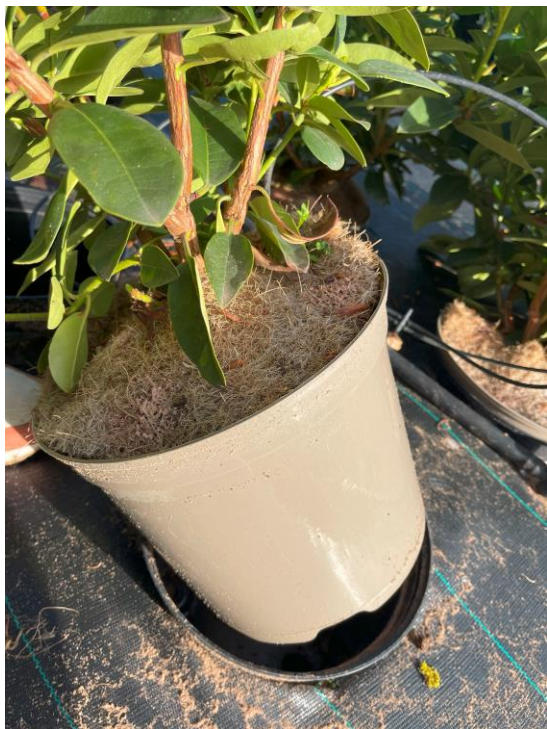


Figure 6. Pots being set in the ground at Osberton.

The train ride to Richards, was the longest yet. I headed back south to Sevenoaks where Richard, my last and final host lives. He and his family welcomed me into their home. After resting for a bit and having tea, we went for a walk on a trail near their house. Walking through the greenery was beautiful and I have never seen so many mushrooms on a trail before in my life!

ROADTRIP TO IPPS

On Oct 10, my fifth day of the trip we were up and off a couple of hours before dawn on our two day road trip to Germany. Two colleges of Richards accompanied us, so we had a full car. Our trip would take us under the English Channel to France then to Belgium, Netherlands, and finally Germany.

Solitair. The first stop of our roadtrip was at Solitair in Belgium. Solitair specializes in large tree production. Their property is huge, with row after row of beautiful and large decorative trees. Every tree was manicured to perfection and we could clearly see its full potential (**Fig. 7**). Many of the trees are decades old and are just waiting for the right person to come and hand select their favorites to add to their own landscapes. Hands-down, Solitair was my favorite nursery.

M. van den Oever. Our second stop was at M. van den Oever, in the Netherlands. They are a container nursery that produces deciduous trees, fruit trees, and a variety of perennials. They had a very efficient shipping facility that was running when we passed through. Their incorporation of belts, watering system, and wrapping machine made their process flow very efficiently. After M. van den Oever, it was time to call it a day. We had delicious dinner and spent the night at a hotel in Hengelo, Netherlands.



Figure 7. Some of the trees at Solitair.

Heinie. On the 6th day we had an early start again as we were headed to Heinie in Germany. They are a container and in-ground nursery with a wide variety of trees and perennials. A few things stood out for me: the first was that throughout their nursery they used retainers that the pot would sit in to prevent them from falling over due to wind. Each one of these wind containers were on the edges of each growing pad (**Fig. 8**). This is a common issue in nurseries back home and it looked like this method could prove to be an easy fix. The second thing that stood out to me was that many of the growing pads had permanent spraying booms installed. This allows their spraying to be very efficient.

Renke zur Mühlen. Our next stop was a Renke zur Mühlen, in Bad Zwischenahn, Germany as a pre-conference tour. Here I met many other members of IPPS. Their facility was very neat and tidy - but what was really interesting to me was their propagation house. They had a no-mist propagation house, which I am not very familiar with (**Fig. 9**). After the conference I realized that it is a common method in the area.



Figure 8. Retainers used to keep edge-row plants from falling over at Heinie.

Next, we took a short ride to the hotel where the conference was going to take place. HansenS Haus am Meer was a very cute hotel on the water of Zwischenahner Meer in Bad Zwischenahn. After settling into our rooms, we had dinner at a local restaurant where I met the rest of the IPPS committee and the ‘6-packers’. The 6-packer program is designed to help anyone new to the horticulture industry. They help throughout the conference and at the end one of them gets chosen to be the following years exchange representative to IPPS-SR.



Figure 9. No-mist propagation at Renke zur Mühlen.

The conference took place over three days. The first two days were presentations in the morning with tours of local nurseries, gardens, and other facilities in the afternoon. The third day was presentations in the morning with a departure time after lunch.

Zu Jeddelloh Pflanzen. The first nursery stop of the conference was at Zu Jeddelloh. They are a container nursery with some very neat and organized facilities. Their plants were impeccable. I saw the permanent booms on individual growing beds here again, and this made me think that it might be a common practice. The thing that impressed me the most though was their shipping facility. Everything is about efficiency and the rolling tables and belts make the process flawless (**Fig. 10**).



Figure 10. Shipping area at Zu Jeddelloh Pflanzen.

Bruns Pflanzen. Our last stop of the day was at Bruns. Bruns is a large specialty tree nursery, and like Solitair - they had the most amazing trees. We saw trees destined for Disney and Mercedes-Benz, and we even got to see some special orders (**Fig. 11**). After seeing some stunning trees we headed to

the Bruns Rhododendron park where the family has developed a huge park primarily composed of rhododendrons that are decades old. In the center, there is a beautiful event center overlooking the pond in the middle of the park. We had dinner here while a few people gave presentations.



Figure 11. Specialty trees at Brunns.

Jens Meyer Jungpflanzen. Our first stop of the second conference day was at Jens Meyer Jungpflanzen. Jens Meyer is a young plants nursery that does the majority of their own production.

Their propagation houses are also no mist houses, but they do have some portable mist sprinklers that can be moved around when needed (**Fig. 12**). They had a very impressive automatic planting machine that would

plant liners and set them on a platform to be taken out to the field.

Klasmann K Deilmann. The final stop of the conference was at Klasmann K Deilmann; a media mixing facility. They did not allow any cameras in their facilities, but they are very clean and organized. It is obvious that media sterilization is a priority for them. We saw how different media is mixed, bagged, and palletized. It was fascinating to see how the process that we normally do not think of occurs. They talked a bit about the issues they are having, specifically with the peat shortages happening throughout Europe.



After the tours we went back to the hotel to freshen-up and prepare for the conference dinner and auction. The dinner was delicious, and the auction was a complete success! I even got to go home with a couple of souvenirs. The next morning was the last day of presentations, but we had to leave a little early since we were going to make the full drive to Richard's house in one day. Additionally, we were going to try and make two more nursery stops on the way!



Figure 12. Propagation house at Jens Meyer.

Rötjes Young Plants. We made it to Rötjes in the Netherlands by late afternoon. We were lucky that they let us take a tour even though they were about to close. They showed us their propagation stations, mist houses, and storage areas. Rötjes has the most pristine propagation houses I have ever seen. The facilities consisted of acres of glass greenhouses. There were liners in

different stages of rooting with some covered like the no-mist nurseries, and some of it was under a portable boom mist system that would roll over the newly stuck liners as needed.

Euro Tree. Down the road from Rötjes was Euro Tree, where Richard had a friend that was happy to give us a quick tour before the

day ended. Euro Tree is primarily a container tree nursery with a wide range of varieties. We saw many of the same type of specialty trees that we saw in other nurseries. When we left Euro Tree, it was dark

and we had to stop at a nearby restaurant to have a quick bite to eat. Once we were done, we drove though until we made it back to Richards house a little after midnight.



Figure 13. Assortment of plants at Provender Nurseries.

Provender Nurseries. The day after getting back, we had a late breakfast and then Richard took me to his workplace at Provender Nurseries. Provender primarily sells to landscaping companies who are part of their system. They have a huge selection of plants for all types of landscapes. Everything looked so good and ready to go (**Fig. 13**).

After getting back, Richard and his family took me to a local Mote. Ightham Mote is a 14th-century manor house, that is beautifully preserved and the gardens around the home are just stunning (**Fig. 14**).

We toured the home and saw some great English architecture. It was a wonderful way to end a great conference.

The next day I took a train ride back to London but was not ready to go home quite yet. In London, I spent an additional three days of my own time exploring and just being a tourist. I went to the palaces, the National Gallery, the London Eye - Europe's tallest cantilevered observation wheel, ate some very good food, and even attended a showing of *The Phantom of the Opera*!



Figure 14. Igham Mote.

CONCLUSION

After reading this, you may think that this trip was exhausting with all the places we visited. And you would not be wrong! To be honest, I truly don't know how we fit so many stops in such a short amount of time, but I am forever grateful that we did. I am extremely thankful for my generous host families for welcoming me into their homes.

The time they took to be personal tour guides in showing me around many nurseries will be something I will never forget. Finally, I would like to say a special thank you to IPPS-SR for providing me with the opportunity of a lifetime. This is something I never dreamed I would be able to partake in and I highly encourage others to apply to have the same opportunity I was afforded.