

The Buckeye Yard and Garden Line

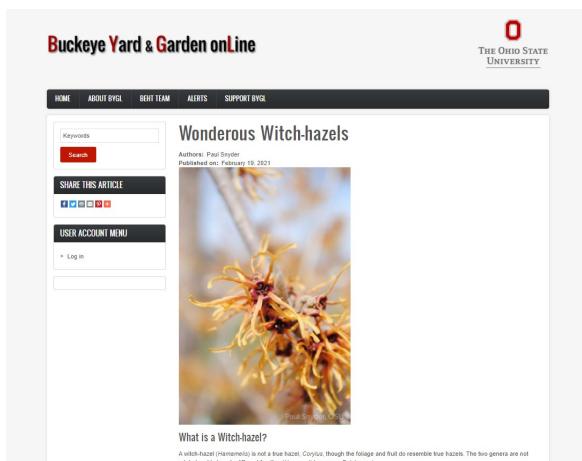
bygl.osu.edu

The Buckeye Yard and Garden Line (BYGL) is a product of The Ohio State University's Buckeye Environmental Horticulture Team (BEHT), formally the Extension Nursery Landscape and Turf Team. It includes a weekly in-service opportunity for Extension professionals, and a web-based resource that provides timely and seasonally-appropriate information on plants, insects, diseases, wildlife, and cultural problems that assists both our internal and external clientele in their horticulture management practices. Additionally, the BYGL promotes and shares information about upcoming educational programs and conferences related to horticulture across the state of Ohio.

The BYGL begins with a weekly in-service opportunity for Extension professionals. Prior to 2020, the weekly Zoom meetings were held seasonally from April – October. Early in 2020, the team decided to hold the weekly in-services year-round. While at first, we thought that there might not be a lot to talk about in the broad sense of horticulture, especially in the dead of winter, but we were amazed at the amount of discussion that occurred and the sharing and learning that happened during Tuesday mornings each and every week.

The in-servicing allowed Extension professionals to share their own landscape and garden observations from the field, both verbally and with supplemental photos, and request feedback if needed from other participants. State specialist shared their ongoing research and our Plant and Pest Diagnostic Clinic (PPDC) Director would report out what was being seen in the lab. During this one-to-three-hour weekly session, Extension professionals learn about current horticulture challenges in real-time and have in depth conversations with a team of experts including county-based educators and staff, and state specialists. These in-services were a combination of teaching, learning and animated discussion.

The second aspect of BYGL are written Alerts that are posted on the BYGL website (bygl.osu.edu). Alerts include the text, reference to additional information or resources, and often include a photo or series of photographs to enhance the alert and increase the information being shared with readers.



To the left is a screen shot of the BYGL website with a recent Alert of witch-hazels. When this Alert was posted, an email message was automatically distributed to the subscribers. Currently, there 2025 individuals receiving the Alerts. Additionally, 4793 individuals are signed up for the weekly newsletter, or the summary of Alerts during a weeklong period from Monday – Sunday. That emails is distributed out Monday mornings.

The BYGL also serves as a searchable resource where all past Alerts are housed. This is especially handy when clientele are searching for information on a specific subject and are looking for a source of information that is research-based.

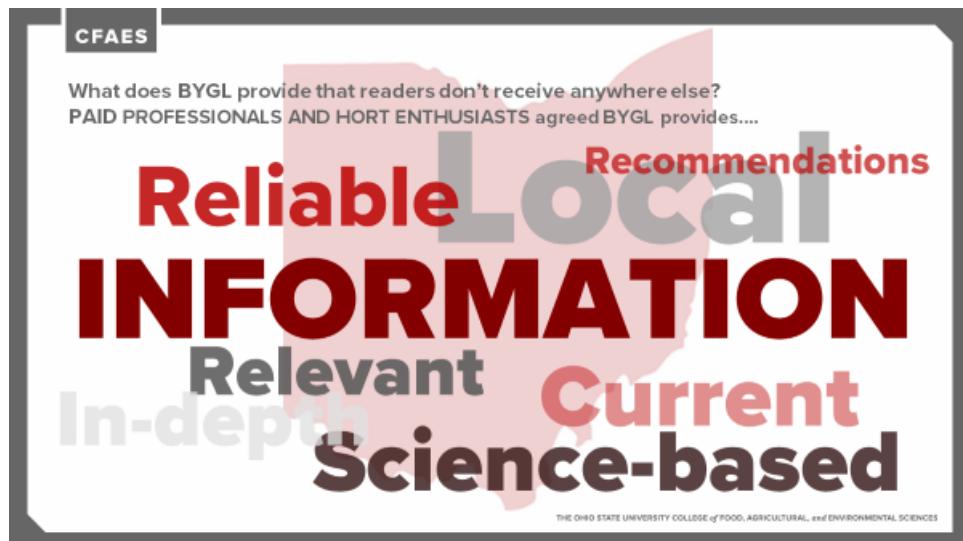
The BYGL has been a long-standing tradition at OSU, that has adapted and evolved as technology improved. In the early 1990s, the intention of the BYGL was to serve Extension Professionals and Ohio Master Gardener Volunteers; however, because of its value, the audience has grown to include green industry professionals (i.e., municipal employees, arborists, those in the landscape industry, nursery growers, and garden center employees) as well as backyard gardeners in addition to the original audience. A simple text-only newsletter was faxed, and then emailed weekly to subscribers. It then evolved to a weekly web-based newsletter, and then finally to the real-time alerts not under any time constraints of a weekly distribution.

In the fall of 2020, there was a survey that was distributed to subscribers and also posted on the website. Results of the survey measured impact and will be directing future outreach and engagement efforts as the BYGL continues to grow and serve its clientele.

Five hundred and seventy-seven respondents completed the survey. Those respondents were from 20 states, plus Washington DC. The breakdown of respondents included: 56% female and 44% male; 80% of those surveyed were over 55 years old; 37% identified themselves as paid professionals, and 63% identified themselves as hort enthusiasts. There were over 1550 comments made throughout the survey. Three-fourths of the readers accessed the BYGL information either daily (7%), weekly (34%) or monthly (35%). Seventy-two percent of survey respondents indicated that they are likely to promote or recommend BYGL to others.

Of those that indicated they were paid professionals, on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) – 7 (strongly agree), readers were asked to rank how useful BYGL information was to their job, business or organization and if they improved their general horticultural skills through knowledge gained through BYGL. The average response was 6.4. Those that indicated that they were hort enthusiasts had an average response of 6.8 on the same scale.

In that same survey, readers shared that BYGL provides the following information that they don't receive anywhere else:



Additionally, paid professionals shared the following quotes when asked what does BYGL provide that they don't receive anywhere else.

CFAES

What does BYGL provide to PAID PROFESSIONALS that they don't receive anywhere else?

"Timely, localized observations in the field, with professional and educational commentary....so that I can stay informed for myself and my clients."

"I rely on these and share them with my staff. A great training tool...a great resource"

"Articles, deeper interest pieces than found elsewhere, that are very well-researched and clearly written by knowledgeable specialists."

"Sustainable recommendations on control if warranted. Just as important from my point of view are recommendations that no actions need to be taken."

"No one else is providing this type of service to professionals."

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Over the last three years, 32 Buckeye Environmental Horticulture Team members have authored 684 BYGL Alerts and have shared over 1,000 images posted as part of the Alerts. Writers are always looking for ways to increase readership and expand subject matter topics requested by subscribers. A recent addition to BYGL is a weekly word of the week. Additionally, we are reviewing survey recommendations and plan to implement suggested topics received from readers in the upcoming year.

BYGL is a multifaceted product of the BEHT that has continued to evolve for 30 years, and will continue to do the same into the future.