

Challenges to developing the market for native shrubs

Jessica D. Lubell. *Department of Plant Science and Landscape Architecture,*
University of Connecticut, Storrs, Connecticut. *jessica.lubell@uconn.edu*

Abstract. There is increased demand for native shrubs to use in developing sustainable landscapes. Native plant species provide support for pollinators and other ecological systems and are a suitable landscape alternative to invasive plants. Through my research and extension program at the University of Connecticut, I have worked to expand the availability of native shrubs in the nursery trade by studying their landscape suitability, propagation and production in containers. This poster presents the issues around developing the market for native shrubs including the need for education about landscape use, lack of liner sources for growers, poor quality of nursery stock, lack of cultivars, and perceived drawbacks of cultivar use.

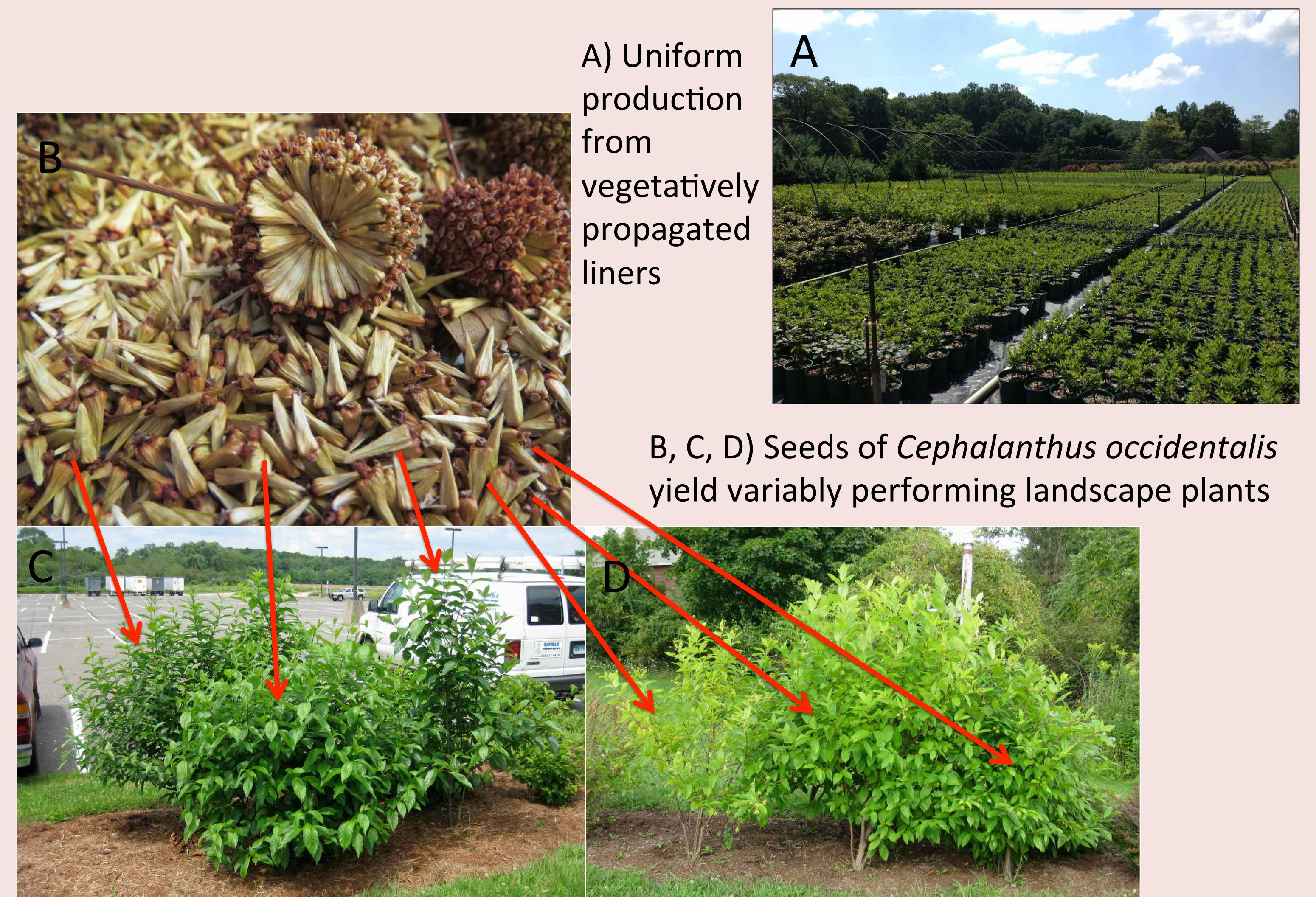
Need for education

- Consumers lack confidence in using native shrubs
- Limited information on adaptability of native shrubs
- UConn research shows potential for expanded use



Growers lack liner sources

- Typically growers buy in liners to start new production, but sources of liners for little known natives don't exist
- No employees with skill set to identify native of interest in the wild in sufficient quantity for initiating new crop
- Prohibitively expensive to send employees collecting over hundreds of miles
- Lack of permission to collect propagules from natural lands



Poor quality nursery stock

- Native species get less care during production than exotics
- Perception that natives can look "wild" (messy)
- Workers are unfamiliar with cultivation needs
- Seed produced plants lack uniformity

Result: Native plant displays (A) at garden centers are not as showy and appealing to consumers as exotic plant displays (B)



Lack of cultivars / Drawbacks of cultivars

- Moving native shrubs mainstream requires use of existing nursery infrastructure of vegetative propagation of cultivars
- Concerns over lack of genetic diversity with cultivar use, potential for genetic contamination, and diminished support for pollinators
- Pollinator support of native shrub species and their cultivars is being tested at UConn

