



2009

Census of Horticultural
Specialties

Marketing Plan

As of September 9, 2009

BACKGROUND

The 2009 Census of Horticultural Specialties is one of the special studies programs conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). The Census of Horticultural Specialties gathers information from all horticultural operations and provides national and state-level data on the number of establishments, value of sales of horticultural products, types of horticultural products, and kinds of horticultural businesses. The Census of Horticultural Specialties is conducted once every 10 years.

The Census of Horticultural Specialties is a special census that needs a tailored marketing effort. The marketing campaign outlined in this plan will address several goals including the following:

- Increase the level of responses from U.S. floriculture, nursery, and greenhouse operations to the Census of Horticultural Specialties through encouragement of timely and thorough responses.
- Demonstrate to growers that their participation directly benefits their own operation, their community and their industry as a whole.
- Increase general awareness and support of NASS and its work among agricultural and rural audiences, helping to identify the differences and value of its various surveys.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

The Census of Horticultural Specialties will encounter some of the same opportunities and challenges as the general Census and other follow-on surveys. Past research has identified some of those challenges, which are internal as well as external.

- **Internal**
 - NASS employees will need additional background information.
 - NASS employees work on hundreds of surveys, which makes focusing on marketing a specific census such as the Horticultural Census difficult.
 - The results of the 2007 Census of Agriculture were released in February 2009 and the Farm and Ranch Irrigation Survey in November 2009. Employees are already expected to continue marketing these results and an additional marketing campaign may not receive as much attention when the Census of Horticultural Specialties is mailed to growers in December 2009.
- **External**
 - We need to ensure target audiences are aware of the Horticulture Census and its purpose and benefits.
 - Respondent burden is a concern as growers have already responded to the 2007 Census of Agriculture and perhaps the Farm and Ranch Irrigation Survey. The Horticulture Census is another program that requires a grower's limited time and attention.
 - Growers are asked to submit a lot of information to the government each year and they don't understand where this information goes and why it benefits them.

- Confidentiality is a previously noted concern of respondents; this is a more specific census with a smaller pool of participants than the general census, however, confidentiality concerns persist.

The marketing efforts to promote the Census of Agriculture have helped pave the way in addressing some of these challenges. We will incorporate the “Your Voice. Your Future. Your Responsibility.” tagline from the Census to ensure its penetration into this specific audience.

AUDIENCES

The Census of Horticultural Specialties report forms will be mailed out to more than 30,000 growers. Following are the audiences that will be targeted for the launch of the Horticulture Census. To make the most effective use of resources, we recommend (where possible) focusing on “driver” audiences, so that they can in essence be trained to become our messengers. For example, internally, we will focus on engaging NASS management (including State Directors). By giving them the proper tools and key messages, they will help educate the rest of NASS and USDA. For external “drivers,” we will focus on coordinating with national leadership of key influencer groups and associations, so they in turn can deliver messages to their member audiences. Driver audiences are identified in bold in the table below.

<u>Internal</u>	<u>External</u>
NASS employees: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headquarters • State Directors/staff • Field enumerators 	Key influencer groups such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture and industry media • Elected officials
USDA officials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secretary/staff • Deputy Secretary • Under Secretaries 	Specialized audiences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horticultural Growers • Horticultural Trade Association • Nursery/Landscape Associations • Greenhouse Manufacturers

OBJECTIVES/STRATEGIES

Internal Objectives –

- Ensure *all* NASS employees receive and understand key messages and goals for the marketing of the Census of Horticultural Specialties.
- Establish the Horticulture Census among *all* NASS employees as an important, distinct addition to the already many valuable NASS surveys.

Internal Strategies –

- Engage and motivate NASS employees by providing them with useful tools to help them market the Horticulture Census and convey consistent messages.

External Objectives –

- Secure 250,000 audience impressions beginning with the mailout of the Census of Horticultural Specialties and continuing throughout the release of the data.
- Initiate and engage partnerships with external stakeholder groups to assist with promotion of the Horticulture Census.

External Strategies –

- Develop partnerships with key organizations to effectively deliver messages to audience segments
 - Horticultural growers
 - Horticultural Trade Association
 - Nursery and Landscape Associations
- Educate and engage key agricultural and rural-based companies or organizations on the value of the Horticulture Census results to encourage third-party support.
- Develop a focused media relations campaign to help distribute messages and convey the importance of participating in the Horticulture Census.

MESSAGING

Internal

- Your work is needed and appreciated in driving response rates for the Census of Horticultural Specialties.
- The Horticulture Census provides valuable aggregate, community-based information that is used by all USDA.
- Your assistance is vital as NASS works to obtain responses to the Horticulture Census in a timely, organized and relevant manner.

External

- As with the 2007 Census of Agriculture, the Census of Horticultural Specialties is your voice, your future, and your responsibility.
- The Horticulture Census is conducted once every 10 years and offers relevant information that all levels of government use to develop programs that impact your life and your community.
- NASS helps show the nation the value of U.S. agriculture by providing a snapshot of production as a whole and as it relates to specific areas such as floriculture, nursery, and greenhouse operations.
- By participating in the Horticulture Census, you will be providing valuable information that will help you improve production methods, marketing tactics and plans for the future of the horticultural industry.

- The Horticulture Census is your opportunity to help ensure the growth and stability of commercial horticulture in the United States.
- Respondents are guaranteed by law (Title 7, U.S. Code) that their individual information will be kept confidential. NASS uses the information only for statistical purposes and publishes data only in tabulated totals.

IMPLEMENTATION

Respondent Package: NASS will design and develop a series of materials to be used in conjunction with the mailout of the Census of Horticultural Specialties report form and throughout the data collection period. These materials will be delivered directly to those in the sample population and include:

- Cover letter
- Second mailout cover letter
- Reminder/thank you postcard
- Reminder auto-dial message

Publicity Package: NASS will design and develop a tool kit to facilitate the understanding and promotion of the Horticulture Census. The tool kit can be distributed both electronically and in hard copy. This tool kit will contain valuable information in a turn-key fashion including:

- Key messages and background information
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Statement stuffer
- Drop-in ads
- Poster (exhibit booth)
- Web site buttons

2007 Census of Agriculture Fact Sheet: NASS will create and distribute a 4-page color fact sheet highlighting data from the 2007 Census of Agriculture on horticulture, nursery, and greenhouse operations and operators. The fact sheet can be used to provide background information and highlight current industry trends when talking about the importance of the Horticulture Census and the need for more detailed data.

Stakeholder Outreach: NASS will identify key organizations to assist in the publicity efforts for the Horticulture Census. We will help facilitate contact and provide the organizations with specific materials to promote the Horticulture Census to their memberships. These outreach efforts are a great way to target Web sites because most of these organizations distribute news and information via the web.

Following are some of the tactics NASS will use:

- Provide FAQs and national news release to stakeholder organizations for inclusion in their publications and posting to their Web sites.
- Provide drop-in ads and Web site buttons for inclusion in the organizations' publications and Web sites.

Below is a list of potential partners:

Society of American Florists (SAF)

Mr. Ira Silvergleit (Advisory Committee member)

Director of Research/Information, Alexandria, Virginia 22314

(703) 838-5228 e-mail: isilverg@safnow.org

Affiliated w/: Greater Washington Society of Association Executives

American Society of Association Executives

Member of Floriculture Crops Survey Advisory Committee

Society of American Florists

Lin Schmale

American Orchid Society

Carlos Fighetti, President

www.aos.org

Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers

David Dowling, President

www.ascfg.org

Connecticut Florists Association

John Tornatore, President

www.flowersplantsinct.com

International Cut Flower Growers Association

www.rosesinc.org

Colorado Nursery & Greenhouse Association

www.coloradonga.org

Perennial Plant Association

Caroline Kiang, President

www.perennialplant.org

National Christmas Tree Association

Rick Dungey, Public Relations Manager

dungey@realchristmastrees.org

OFA – an Association of Floriculture Professionals

Jim Broderick, Interim CEO

www.ofa.org

Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association

Monty Knox, President

www.fngla.org

American Nursery & Landscaping Association

Robert Dolibois, Executive Vice President, Marc Tefteau

www.anla.org

Ball Horticultural Company

Marvin Miller, Market Research Manager

www.ballhort.com

Purdue University

Jennifer Dennis

Tradeshows— We will target key industry and media tradeshows to promote participation in the Horticulture Census. Below is a list of upcoming tradeshow opportunities:

- National Christmas Tree Association, August 12-15, 2009, Chattanooga, Tennessee - **ATTENDED** (Provided statement stuffer cards)
- International Irrigation Show, December 2-4, 2009, Texas (booth)
- Mid Atlantic Nursery Trade Association, January 6-8, 2010, Baltimore, Maryland (booth)
- Mid America Hort Trade Show, January 20-22, 2010, Chicago, Illinois
- Gulf State Hort Expo, January, 29-30, 2010, Mobile, Alabama
- American Nursery & Landscape Association, January 30, Louisville, Kentucky
- SE Greenhouse Conference & Trade Show, June 17-19, 2010, Greenville, SC (booth)
- International Floriculture Expo, June 23-25, 2010, Miami, Florida
- Ohio International Floriculture Short Course, July 11-13, Columbus, Ohio
- Soil & Water Conservation Society Annual Conference, July 2010

Media Relations (proactive, opportunistic): Media relations is a great tool to deliver key messages in an effective and efficient manner. NASS will focus on proactive and opportunistic media relations efforts. Proactive opportunities are carefully scheduled announcements, typically in the form of news releases, (print and radio) that are distributed and pitched at a particular time frame for maximum value. Opportunistic media relations is more spontaneous, consisting of quick turnaround announcements that tap into a hot issue or trend (i.e. milestone announcements).

Following are some of the earned media tactics NASS will use:

Print News Releases: Develop print news releases based on the key messages and talking points for the specific audiences identified for the Horticulture Census to increase awareness and participation. NASS will develop a series of three news releases to be issued prior to and throughout the collection period.

- News Release No. 1 – National news release at the department level announcing the start of the Horticulture Census.
- News Release No. 2 – State news release template NASS field offices can use announcing the start of the Horticulture Census.
- News Release No. 3 – State news release template NASS field offices can use towards the end of data collection to remind growers to respond.

USDA Radio News: NASS will work with the USDA’s Broadcast Media and Technology Center to pitch story ideas about the Census of Horticultural Specialties for feature on the USDA radio newslines. NASS will work to coordinate two stories to be broadcast prior to and throughout the collection period.

- Radio No. 1 - USDA radio newslines story describing the benefits of the Horticulture Census and announcing report forms are being mailed.
- Radio No. 2 – A follow-up USDA radio newslines piece when the deadline is near to respond growers to respond.

New Media Tactics: NASS will take advantage of new media tactics for distributing quick information and reminders to the public and media about the Census of Horticultural Specialties. The primary new media tactic used will be Twitter. NASS will tweet about the Horticulture Census prior to mailout and throughout the data collection period to help spread our key messages and encourage participation.

Web site updates: The Census of Agriculture Web site (www.agcensus.usda.gov) will feature information on the Census of Horticultural Specialties. NASS will post background information and frequently asked questions as well as Web site buttons and drop-in advertisements for partners to easily download.

MARKETING TIMELINE: CENSUS OF HORTICULTURAL SPECIALITIES

<u>TASK</u>	<u>DUE DATE</u>
Ag Census Web site Updates	Ongoing
Stakeholder Outreach	Ongoing
Tradeshow Participation	Ongoing
Draft Census of Horticultural Specialties Marketing Plan	August 28, 2009
Publicity Package (Statement stuffer, Web site buttons)**	September 7, 2009
Finalized Census of Horticultural Specialties Marketing Plan*	September 9, 2009
Publicity Package (Key Messages, FAQs, drop-in ads, poster)**	October 19, 2009
News Release No. 2 (State template)*	October 19, 2009
Respondent Package (Cover letter, second mailout letter, postcard)*	November 9, 2009
News Release No. 1 (National USDA release)	December 7, 2009
Begin Tweeting about Horticulture Census	December 7, 2009
2007 Census Fact Sheet – Horticulture Focus**	December 14, 2009
Radio No. 1 (USDA Radio News line)	December 14, 2009
Respondent Package (Auto-dialer message)	January 2010
News Release No. 3 (State template)*	January 2010
Radio No. 2 (USDA Radio Newslines)	January 2010
Due Date	February 5, 2010
Release Date	December 2010

*Post to PRIME Center

**Post to PRIME Center and www.agcensus.usda.gov