

Testimony of Mike Johnson

Summerhill Nursery

Madison, CT

Several bills have been passed and now bill #6032 has been raised at the instigation of a small group of property owners that have had problems with Phyllostachys (a form of running bamboo) spreading onto their property. This bamboo had been planted before the use of bamboo barrier systems were commonly used to contain it. One would like to assume their agenda was to get legislation passed so that in the future this problem would be eliminated. But at the same time allow Phyllostachys to be planted as a natural, good-looking screen between properties and to hide “eyesores” especially in urban areas.

If bill #6032 were passed, the main use of this very valuable plant would be eliminated. We now know with a good barrier system, you could plant Phyllostachys right up to a property line (although I would prefer 3 or 4’ away). The nursery standard now is 60 mil black polyethylene placed at least 30 inches in the ground with 2 inches aboveground so that any escaping rhizomes can be observed and cut off. A 10 to 12 inch solid backing aboveground behind a polyethylene barrier would make “escape” almost impossible. There are monetary penalties to be imposed if a barrier system is not used. So I am sure this law will be heeded and obeyed by landscapers and property owners.

To comply with public act 13-82, a tag is placed on every Phyllostachys sold in Connecticut explaining its possible problems and how to construct a barrier. Please also keep in mind that Phyllostachys, like all bamboo is easily eradicated with 1 or 2 applications of glyphosate (Roundup) in mid to late summer.

Last winter I met with Representative Gentile and Senator Meyer the chairs of this committee. We all agreed that the bills passed were somewhat ambiguous and confusing to both landscapers and enforcement officers. I proposed that a small group of legislators or aides, members of the nursery industry, concerned property owners and most importantly Dr. Jeffrey Ward of the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station have a meeting. Dr. Ward would be an impartial expert (he has been experimenting with bamboo barrier and eradication of stands of Phyllostachys). At that time, they could propose a concise, easy to understand law that would protect property owners and also allow the use of this valuable plant.

I hope you will take this under consideration and also decide not to introduce Bill # 6032.