

A WARM WELCOME TO THE NORTH CENTRAL WEED SCIENCE SOCIETY. William G. Johnson, Assistant Professor, Department of Botany and Plant Pathology, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907.

The city of St. Louis and state of Missouri welcomes the North Central Weed Science Society to the Hyatt Regency Hotel for its 57th annual conference. The purpose of this presentation is to highlight some of the history, demographics and agricultural productivity of the state of Missouri. The land area which now encompasses Missouri was originally discovered by French explorers in the 1600's and named the Louisiana Territory in honor of French royalty during that era. Ste. Genevieve was established as the first white settlement in 1735 and Pierre Laclede founded St. Louis in 1764. The French and Spaniards battled for control of the Louisiana Territory during the late 1700's and eventually sold to the United States in 1803. Missouri became the 24th state in 1821 and became to be known as the gateway to the west because trailheads for the Santa Fe and Oregon trails were located in Independence, MO and the Pony Express mail route connected Missouri to California. The Gateway Arch was completed in 1965 as a memorial to this history. The state flower and bird are the hawthorn (genus *Crataegus*) and eastern bluebird, respectively.

Missouri has a population of about 5.6 million people with approximately 55% of the population residing in Kansas City, St. Louis, and Springfield. With a land area of 68,886 square miles, Missouri averages 81.2 people per square mile. There are 109,000 farms in Missouri with roughly 4.6 billion dollars in annual sales. Farms in Missouri raise a wide variety of livestock and crops. Approximately 59% of the receipts are from livestock and 41% are from crop sales. Missouri ranks in the top ten in crop productivity in grain sorghum (4th), hay (5th), rice and soybean (6th), watermelon and corn (9th), and cotton (10th). Missouri ranks in the top ten in livestock productivity in beef cows (2nd), turkeys (5th), milk cows (6th), hogs (7th), and broilers (10th).

Missouri has been a gracious host to the NCWSS annual conference 10 times between 1950 and 2002. The annual conference was held in Kansas City in 1953, 1971, 1987, 1993 and 2000 and in St. Louis in 1973, 1977, 1985, 1996, and 2002. Reasons for this include the centralized location and ease of transportation via airline travel.

Finally, weeds and weed science have had a profound influence on the history of this state. In 1899, Willard Duncan Vandiver made this statement at a political rally "I am from a state that raises corn, cotton, and cockleburs....frothy eloquence neither satisfies nor convinces me. I am from Missouri....you have got to show me!". This is widely believed to be the reason that Missouri has also become known as the "showme" state and indicates that even over 100 years ago, Missouri was famous for its weeds.