WEED GARDENING AT THE PURDUE UNIVERSITY DIAGNOSTIC TRAINING AND RESEARCH CENTER.

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Every year, over one thousand agricultural professionals attend training sessions at the Purdue University Crop Diagnostic Training and Research Center at either the Agronomy Research Center (ARC) in West Lafayette, IN or the Northeast Purdue Agricultural Center (NEPAC) in Columbia City, IN. Training sessions are used to sharpen crop problem trouble shooting skills using hands-on teaching techniques. Participants see in-field demonstrations covering micronutrient applications, fertilizer placement, herbicide demonstrations, insect resistant crops and crop diseases in corn, wheat, soybeans and alfalfa.

A weed identification garden was created to give participants a chance to see weeds which the may not usually encounter and practice identification skills. There are 90 specimens at ARC and 35 at NEPAC. Each ring is a 3-foot wide by 4-foot deep plastic pipe buried in the ground. The ring has a single weed species planted in it. The rings are hand-weeded and sprayed with selective herbicides after the weeds have been planted. Weeds were grown in the greenhouse, sewn into the rings or transplanted from fields. The weeds are grouped by family, with similar weeds next to each other. During training sessions plots were utilized in various ways including looking at the weed garden at their own leisure, walked thru by a weed expert or given a mini-quiz over weed identification. Participants have given much positive feedback about the look of the garden and its layout. Future plans for the garden include grouping weeds by cropping system affected, grouping by timing of emergence or control windows, all while trying to time weed stages to match the time of the training sessions.

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