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American Standard for Nursery Stock – Frequently Asked Questions

What is the purpose of the American Standard for Nursery Stock?

The American Standard for Nursery Stock (officially designated as ANSI Z60.1, and referred to here as “the Standard”) facilitates commercial transactions involving nursery stock by establishing a “common language” for sizing and describing various types of nursery and greenhouse grown plants. The Standard is recognized by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), an internationally recognized standard-setting body. It is maintained and periodically revised consistent with ANSI requirements, and AmericanHort is an ANSI-accredited standards development organization (“SDO”). While the Standard is not intended to be a plant quality standard in its strictest sense, some aspects of the Standard do in practice establish minimum expectations that may influence plant quality.

The Standard does not apply to retail consumer transactions.

Who Uses the Standard?

The Standard is most often used in commercial transactions where a set of specifications is needed to develop project bids, and is also useful in commercial transactions between growers, distributors, garden centers, and landscape installers. It is widely referenced by landscape architects and municipalities. In other words, unless the parties have an established relationship with a history of transactions that provides mutual confidence that the buyer and the seller are fully communicating the terms of their transaction, the Standard should be referenced to describe the nursery stock being purchased and sold.

Does the Standard have the force of law?

From AmericanHort’s perspective, as the standards developer, its use is strictly voluntary based on the wishes of the parties engaged in a commercial transaction. However, once the parties voluntarily agree to follow the Standard, compliance with the Standard becomes part of the contract and, therefore, legally enforceable by the parties. Also, many federal, state, and local laws or building codes incorporate the Standard by reference, so anyone writing specifications for or supplying nursery stock on a government project needs to comply with the Standard.

How should a grower properly inform their customers that their plants comply with the minimum required standards of the American Standard for Nursery Stock?

A grower that complies with the minimums set forth in the Standard should inform their customers by simply stating, in catalogs, advertising, and other documents, as follows: "All of our plants meet or exceed the minimum requirements of the American Standard for Nursery Stock (ANSI Z60.1)"

Is it necessary for growers to follow the Standard in their marketing materials (and internal databases) when indicating plant size and container class specifications?

Yes. A prudent grower will follow the Standard in order to present correct marketing specifications. The most common mistakes that growers commit are (1) only indicating container size with no plant size specification; and, (2) using container volumes rather than container class specifications in the Standard. In the latter case, improperly using specific container volume or size descriptions (e.g., "1 gallon" or "10-inch basket") may subject growers to enforcement actions by agencies that enforce weights and measures laws if the container does not meet the stated volume or size measurement.

The 2014 revisions include a significant change related to co-dominant stems on Type 1 and Type 2 shade trees. Does the revision include updated information on culling and pruning trees?

Yes. Growers seeking to comply with the Standard must meet the new "minimum quality requirement" (see Contents - 1.3 Minimum requirements for all nursery stock, pg. 8).

For further information, recommendations for revision of the Standard, or requests for interpretation of the Standard:

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