The International Horticultural Consultants Professional Interest Group (ICON) has been very active around the mission to “discuss the credentials and accreditation of international consultants and sources of information, backstopping, teamwork, training, experience, and communications necessary for effective employment as an international consultant in either the private or public sector, and to develop a directory of international horticultural consultants in ASHS and their sources of information”. Over the past ten years, the group offered a strong voice to advance horticulture as an important profession impacting specifically developing countries which are facing various issues of hunger, poverty, and therefore limited access to resources. The group brings an abundance of knowledge, wisdom, and opportunities of working in international settings to ASHS members. Almost every year during the past ten years, the group organized educational workshops where ASHS members can learn what it is like working as an international consultant, supporting those with limited experience yet with a strong passion in helping others using their horticultural expertise. In these workshops sponsored by the ICON group, carefully selected speakers share their first-hand experience as a consultant/scientist/researcher/educator participating in international programs, present employment opportunities, or provide training. These workshops are full of wisdom based on successfully navigating different cultural and technological backgrounds and have been attracting a large and diverse audience over the years. The ICON group efforts inspire new generations (i.e., students) and young professionals who then make a huge impact in various programs. The following is a short summary of what the group has accomplished.

In 2011, the annual conference included ICON sponsored Workshop ‘Various Experiences in Overseas Consulting (Paid and/or Volunteer)’, in which three speakers shared their experiences in and thoughts about working in Afghanistan, Burma, Laos, Lebanon, and Uzbekistan. Following the success of this workshop, the 2012 workshop focused on opportunities in ‘International Engagement: Linking to Horticulture CRSP and USAID’. In this four-hour long program, speakers from USAID and USAID’s Initiative Horticulture CRSP (Collaborative Research Support Program) introduced ways to engage in international research and development. Academic speakers who were participating in USAID funded projects in Africa or Farmer-to-farmer projects in Bangladesh and Uganda shared their experiences, thoughts, and skills.

The ICON group also emphasizes collaboration with other ASHS entities. For example, in 2013, working with three other professional interest groups, the International Horticultural Issues and Networking (IHIN), the Postharvest (PH), and the Asian Horticulture (WGAH) Interest Groups, offered a joint workshop titled ‘International Consultation, Outreach, and Capacity Building’, which was held to reflect the global trend of increased transcontinental commerce and opportunities/challenges to work in international horticulture. Topics included an introduction
of how U.S.-based faculty members can be involved in international horticulture, as it is important not just to assist farmers but also support education for developing the next generation of consultants. Another presenter shared experiences of conducting international field trips and study abroad programs for U.S. horticulture students to enhance professional competitiveness in the international arena.

The 2015 ICON workshop ‘International Horticultural Consultants Workshop’ emphasized the profession of international consultants. Topics such as “Bridging the cultural gap” and ‘Needs of flexibility” were full of insights on appropriate professional behavior and challenges working in a developing country. In 2016, job opportunities along with political changes and horticultural diversification (i.e., crops and markets) were discussed in the workshop ‘Seize Your Future Internationally: New Opportunities in Horticultural Consulting’. Cultural openness and flexibility are obviously critical in international horticulture. Speakers shared research and education opportunities in Southeast Asia, India, Middle East, and Central American countries. This workshop generated a series of refereed articles published at HortScience:


In 2018, two workshops involved ICON members. ‘Urban Horticulture: From Local Initiative to Global Success Stories’ introduced the global trend of urban horticulture integrating local, regional, and national topics in a global context. The other, ‘International Horticulture and Foreign Assistance: How Some Aid Agencies and Not-for-Profit Organizations Use Horticulture (and How You Can Become Involved)” introduced information about “how horticulture plays an integral part of many foreign aid programs” and how ASHS members can become involved in such programs. This workshop generated a series of refereed articles published at HortTechnology:


Most recently (in 2019), the group discussed funding opportunities for international horticulture for all types of potential consultants, from students to emeriti in a workshop ‘Don’t Gamble, Travel with Money – Funding for International Collaboration’.

These workshops organized by this group attracted many members and students at ASHS conferences. A poster presentation by Dr. Mary Henry (University of Florida) in the 2014 annual conference introduced the ICON group mission and international horticultural opportunities, listing various horticultural expertise in demand, international organizations and programs, all valuable resources provided by the ICON group. In addition to the strong presence in annual conference programs, the group has also been active on twitter and publishes ‘International Opportunities for Horticulturists’ in ASHS newsletters. Archives of these postings are available in the International Division News of ASHS website ([https://ashs.org/page/InternationalNews](https://ashs.org/page/InternationalNews)).

The current ICON group leadership includes Dr. Rhuanito S. Ferrarezi (chair, University of Florida), Dr. Dilip Nandwani (chair-elect, Tennessee State University) and Dr. Sarada Krishnan (secretary, Denver Botanic Gardens). If you have questions or want to be more directly involved in ICON group activities and discussion please contact Dr. Rhuanito S. Ferrarezi at rferrarezi@ufl.edu.
Dr. Dilip Nandwani giving international consultancy in Bangladesh. Source: Dilip Nandwani.