

AOSA/SCST Field Tour Summary 2016

The AOSA/SCST meeting in Portland included a very successful field tour for 2016. Reporting on this tour as a guy from the Midwest in the middle of the Corn Belt, I hope I can do it justice. Three tour busses left the hotel on June 7th at 11 am. The agenda included four stops in the agricultural area south of Portland. These included Mountain View Seeds, EZ Orchards, Universal Seed, and Rogue Brewery.

The ride to the first stop was perhaps as entertaining as the tours themselves. One could see at least all of the following crops: hops, grasses, lettuce, peas, poppies, multiple fruit trees, multiple berry crops, garlic, onions, hazelnuts, corn, wheat, radish, sod farms, blueberries, cherries, Christmas trees, and mint. Other observations from the ride that stood out were the pollen clouds over the grass seed fields, the view of Mt Hood, a good lunch, and the lead bus almost hit a truck that pulled out in front of it.

At Mountain View Seeds the group walked through their facilities and observed the equipment needed to dry, clean, and package different grass seeds. I believe they said they could handle 20 million pounds of turf grass per season, including tall fescues, perennial ryegrass, and Kentucky bluegrass among others. Quite a few people were having their allergies act up at this facility, including myself, but it was impressive nonetheless.

Next was the EZ Orchards, which included an apple orchard and strawberry farm. They have cider specific apples for cider through the traditional fermenting process. It was a place with a farm tourism emphasis and they mentioned they had a corn maze and pumpkins in the past. The highlight of this stop was the absolutely delicious multi berry shortcake sundae with blueberries, Logan berries, & red raspberries. More traditional strawberry shortcake was also an option.

At Universal Seed, a third party seed producer, the group witnessed a seed cleaning facility that included a color sorter, spirals for brassica, multiple screen cleaners, and gravity scalping. Other pieces of equipment included a de-bearder, for chard and spinach, and an indent (rotating drum) air separation system. Some of the other seeds cleaned and packaged at this facility included, onions, Chinese kale, and asparagus.

The last stop was a favorite of many, the Rogue Brewery Farm. The group was given free samples of their different brews including some that contained the hops grown on that exact location. The tour included a description of how the hops were grown, harvested, dried, and stripped from the vines. The BBQ meal was excellent and quite complimentary to the brews on tap. Personally, I was very hoppy that we were able to spend so much time there in hop heaven.

Brad Johnson