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Innovative extension using epoxy resin displays and time lapse photography.

Agricultural extension is often more impactful if it relies on showing and demonstrating, as opposed to only telling. Using fresh plant materials in demonstrations and digging root pits for field days are two common extension resources currently used by ag researchers. Fresh plant material makes excellent extension content, particularly for showing leaf diseases. They can be passed around at grower meetings or field days and participants can see, touch, and feel the characteristics of a particular disease or weed. Unfortunately, however, they tend to degrade quickly, rely on time sensitive in-field collection, and are often season specific. Another common extension tool are root pits, which provide a great way to visualize the above and below ground portions of sugarbeets simultaneously. However, it is time consuming to dig and carefully wash the soil away to expose the roots. They are also immovable, non-permanent, and permanently disturb the soil footprint they are dug upon. To overcome the challenges of these extension materials, we developed methodologies for preserving fresh sugarbeet and weed plant material in epoxy resin blocks, and for using time lapse photography to show the above and below ground portions of a sugarbeet grown in custom-built plexi-glass boxes. Both of these methods have been very well received at grower meetings and field days and can be further customized and developed in the future.