

Use of Workshops to Prepare Students for Their Internship Experience



Introduction

The Department of Agronomy at Kansas State University has a required internship for all students. The internship program is very structured and includes an evaluation by the employer and an assessment by the student. The student evaluation asks for input regarding skills that interns think need more emphasis prior to the internship experience.

Justification

The majority of internships involve field based crop consulting activities. Evaluations often indicate the need for more current information to assist interns with pest control practices, identifying production problems, and assessing crop development. To address this concern, the Department has organized a two-night workshop series for all students enrolled in summer internships.



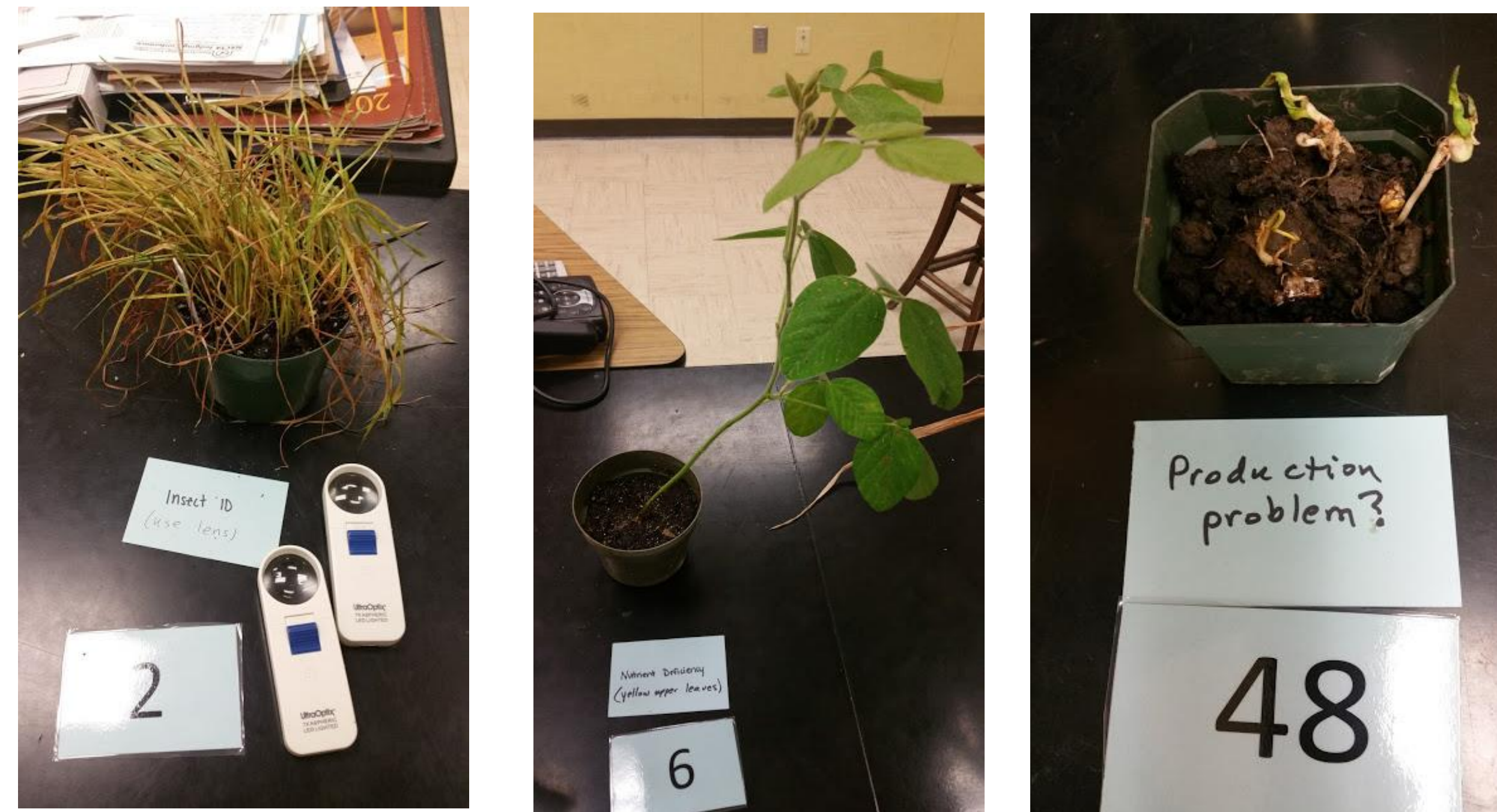
Workshop Components

- One night is focused on disease and insect pest management and current production problems. Three extension faculty members each give 30-minute presentations.
- A homework assignment is given consisting of a set of basic agronomic math calculations and calibration problems. The assignment is graded and reviewed at the start of the second night.
- The second night includes a review of weed identification using live plant samples and "lab practical" stations.
- The stations focus on crop developmental stages, nutrient deficiencies, herbicide injury symptoms, and other crop production problems. Stations also include practice interpreting pesticide labels or seed bags, sprayer nozzle selection, evaluating soil test results, interpreting crop performance data for hybrid and variety selection, etc.
- Attendance earns bonus points toward the final grade for the internship course.

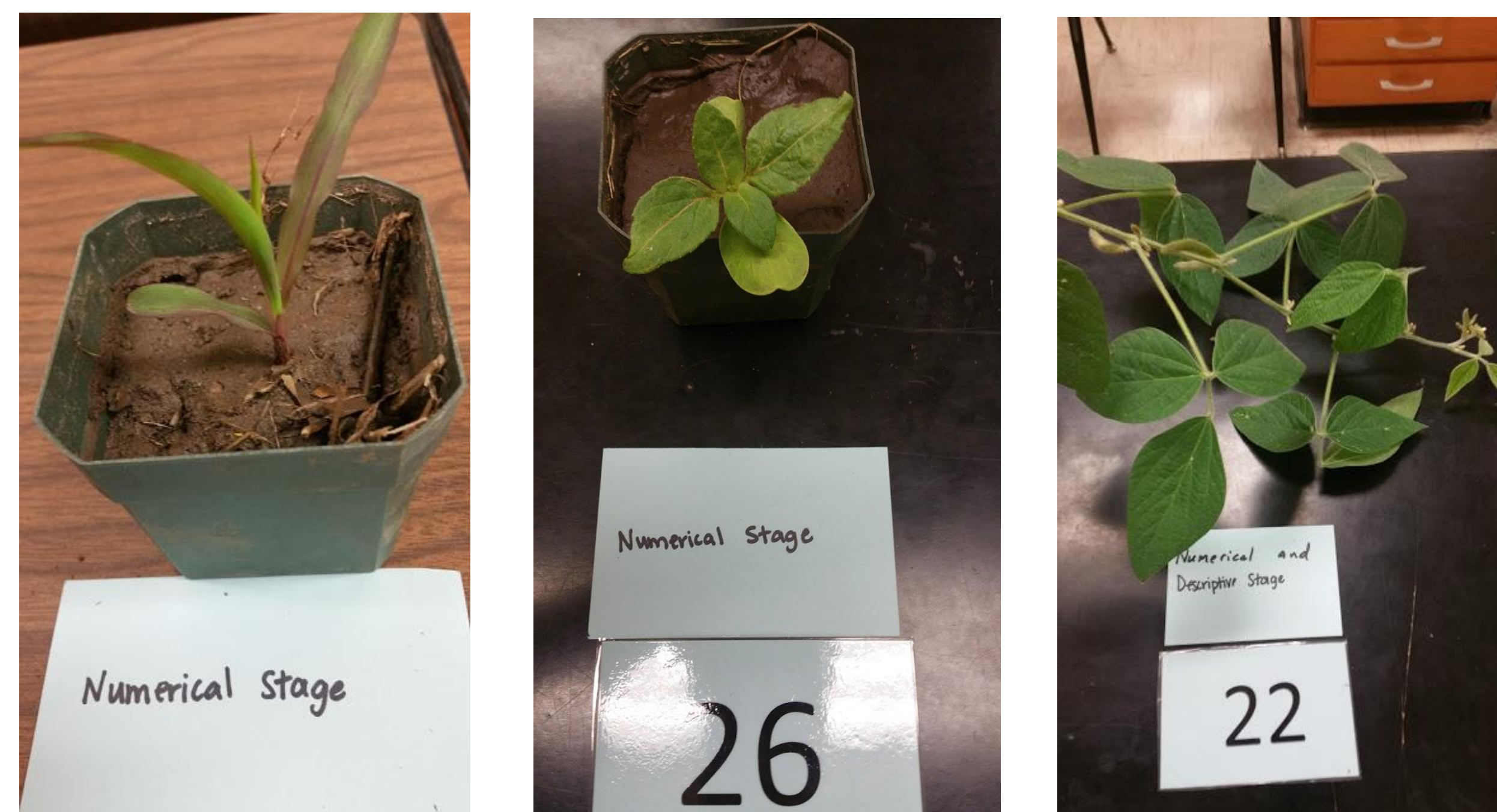
Workshop Action



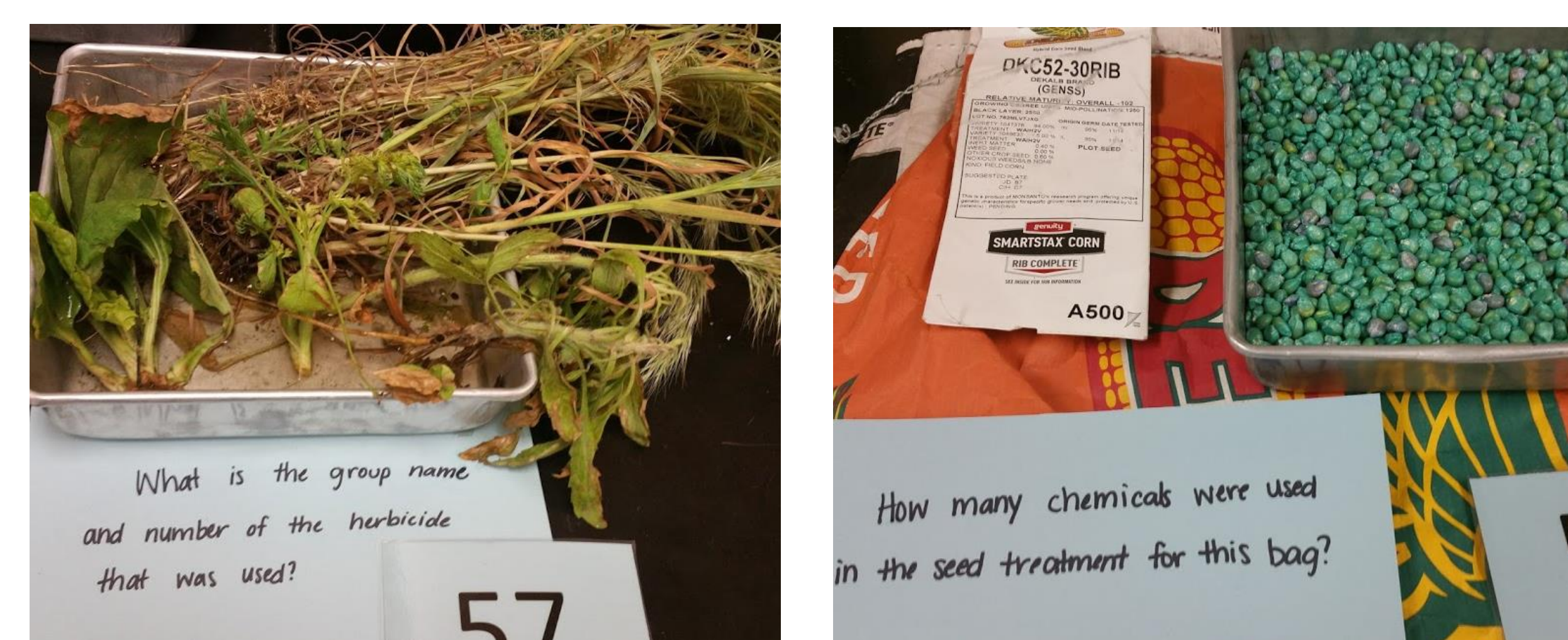
Students identify weeds in the vegetative stage, an essential skill for crop consulting interns.



Stations illustrating pest problems, nutrient deficiencies, environmental stress, and other production problems are included in the practical component.



A strong emphasis on crop developmental stages is included since crop consulting interns need to be very proficient in staging crops for management decisions.



Questions over topics such as herbicide use and seeding practices allow students to review concepts learned in classes before heading to the field for their internship.

Workshop Action



Students are allowed to work in pairs, which lets them learn concepts they may not know from a peer, and allows them to teach concepts to a peer.

Survey Results

In the fall of 2017, a survey was given to evaluate student perceptions of the value of the workshops. Highlights of the survey results were as follows:

In general, the workshops were:

36%	Extremely valuable
40%	Quite valuable
20%	Somewhat valuable
4%	Limited in value
0%	Of no value at all

Relative to my specific internship, the workshops were:

32%	Extremely applicable
32%	Quite applicable
24%	Somewhat applicable
8%	Limited in application
4%	Not applicable at all

Conclusions

- Students have rated the workshops as a valuable tool for helping them prepare for their internships
- For younger students, workshops provide at least an introduction to topics they may not yet have covered in classes
- For older students, workshops provide a review of essential topics before they head to the field
- Students with internships not in crop consulting desire a workshop focused more on their needs

Acknowledgements

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