

# Containers Reign During "Symphony of Color"

On July 27th, approximately 1,500 visitors attended the Ball "Symphony of Color" event, which highlighted the Simply Beautiful and Nature's Décor programs. Attendees saw an abundance of new varieties, enjoyed a catered lunch, got new ideas for combination planters and took advantage of Ball staff for technical questions.

It was an exciting day in particular for Jody and Rick Ouding, Kalamazoo Specialty Plants, Kalamazoo, Mich., who won ownership of the new, bright yellow VW Beetle marked with the Simply Beautiful logo. The two remaining finalists, Wes DeLong, Enterline's Greenhouse, Milton, Pa., and Cecilia Chastek, Chastek Greenhouses, Inc., Corcoran, Minn., received cash credits of \$1,000 toward future purchases of Ball products. The contest was officially launched during the Ohio Short Course in July 2000; Ball customers' names were entered into the drawing each time they ordered \$1,000 of Simply Beautiful products.

Surrounding the Simply Beautiful garden, open since July 2001, the larger Ball trial gardens feature 400 new varieties of seed and vegetative annuals and cutflowers; more than 1,600 mixed containers; and over 200 varieties of petunias. With such an overwhelming number of plants, being able to see novelties and combinations in person is an important part of the decision-making process for growers and buyers. Maria DeWald, Ph.D., creative director at DeWald Gardens, Fort Wayne, Ind., agreed: "I like to see the new product actually in a container instead of just a small picture." Seeing a new vegetative monopsis variety, 'Blue Papillo', helped Maria decide that she wanted to implement it in the DeWald container program. "I think we can really sell a lot of that," she said. She also expressed interest in the new line of rex begonias, which includes such varieties as 'Fancy Large Rex Fairy'. "It's hard to make a shade container," Maria said, "so it's nice to find something you can do with shade."

Beth Motman, of Motman's Greenhouses and Orchards, Grand

Rapids, Mich., was also focused on new ideas for container plantings. "People are almost forced to go to containers nowadays because many are moving into condos," she explained. She pointed out Petunia 'Tidal Wave Silver' as a new favorite.

President/Owner David Levy, Willow Oaks Flower Farm, Brownsville, Tenn., was also looking to amplify container selections for his growing retail business. Cuphea 'Firecracker' and Coleus 'Purple Emperor', though not new, were two varieties that won his attention. When asked which novelty had most piqued his interest, Dianthus 'Purple Bouquet', recent winner of both the Mississippi Medallion award and 2000 Minnesota Select Perennial award, made the number one list.

Container ideas also abounded via the Nature's Décor program — launched at the California Pack Trials in April 2000. Promotional displays for the program flanked the presentation tables, featuring the brand's tear-off "recipes" for full sun, shade and partial sun containers designed to guide consumer purchases of plant material for successful container gardening. The presentation also included a tour of "Anna's Garden," which

highlighted all varieties listed in the Nature's Décor recipes, to show that these plants also perform well in small bedding plant areas.

And with so many members of the Ball technical staff at the disposal of customers, the event offered more than just a show of flowers. According to Stephen G. DeWald, Ph.D, president of DeWald Gardens, "It's nice to be exposed to some of the Ball technical people so I can get ideas about control problems."

The next Ball Field Day will be held July 26, 2002. For more information, call (800) 879-BALL. 

*Brandi Danielle Thomas is associate editor of GPN.*

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