

NEWS on the GROW

compiled by Catherine Evans



America in Bloom (AIB) — the name brings to mind flowers, parks, the great outdoors, our country. It's simple — "Planting pride in our communities" is the main goal.

AIB is organized by the floriculture industry through OFA. The program encourages volunteerism and involves municipal governments, businesses, organizations and citizens in improving their community's quality of life. OFA is pleased to partner with the AIB organization to provide this intense, but friendly, community contest.



AIB is a program for any community of any size in any area. The organization is dedicated to promoting nationwide beautification programs and both personal and community involvement through the use of flowers, plants, trees and other environmental and lifestyle enhancements, and to providing educational programs and resources.

The AIB program brings all community efforts that improve the quality of life under an umbrella that creates a sense of unity. The contest is a forum of expression and a rallying point. All participants win by working together to beautify and improve their communities.

This year, 43 cities are participating in the AIB beautification contest. Throughout the summer, professionally trained teams of judges travel the country evaluating each community in eight criteria: community involvement, heritage preservation, environmental awareness, tidiness, floral displays, turf and groundcover areas, landscaped areas and urban forestry.

Awards will be presented at AIB's annual symposium and awards ceremony September 18-20 in Chicago, Ill., which won AIB's largest population category last year.

Many of last year's cities have returned, but some are taking the year off to work on their programs. They will be implementing recommendations from the AIB judges and networking with other cities for ideas. Last year's winners graduated to various international challenges.

The 2002 winners in each of six population categories were Chicago, Ill.; Kalamazoo County, Mich.; Fayetteville, Ark.; Westlake, Ohio; Fairhope, Ala.; and Camp Hill, Pa.

AIB debuted in 2001 as part of Canada's successful Communities in Bloom (CIB) program. At that time, four U.S. cities partnered with four Canadian cities. CIB is modeled after similar programs in France, England and Ireland. In 2002, nearly 40 cities with populations ranging from 2,000-3 million participated in AIB.

As the administrator of the AIB contest, OFA is excited to be involved with these communities as they beautify their cities while encouraging community involvement, patriotism and civic pride. For more information on how you can support America in Bloom contact AIB at (614) 487-1117; E-mail: aib@ofa.org; or www.americainbloom.org.

Southeast Greenhouse Conference

This year's Southeast Greenhouse Conference, held June 19-21, 2003, brought 1,723 attendees and 166 speakers to the Palmetto Expo Center, Greenville, S.C. The conference started off with educational workshops on June 19, 2003 followed by the Keynote Speaker, Lloyd Traven from Peace Tree Farm, and then the attendees were off to the Embassy Suites for the Welcome Reception. The next two days were full of more educational seminars and the trade show, which held 1,315 exhibitors.

Talk on the Floor

Being in the Southeast, where the spring and early summer were exceptionally wet, weather was the big talk amongst attendees of the Conference. Both growers and retailers in the Southeast were affected by the record-breaking rainfall, with several growers describing an entire month of wet weekends. One retailer we visited in Charlotte was even holding its annual after summer sale — two months early — due to poor sales that they felt was a result of the weather. This is not normally a buying show, and that's a good thing because few had the excess cash to write orders.

With Home Depot headquarters in Atlanta and Wal-Mart in Bentonville, Ark., the Southeast is the land of giant discount retailers, and talk about the big boys was all over the trade show floor. Specifically, everyone was theorizing about the continuation of Lowe's Miracle Grow program. The program had another painfully slow season; we couldn't find one grower that didn't lose more money than they made



with the program. From what we heard, the problems range from limited store level implementation opportunities to poor variety choices (a la Martha Stewart) to inflated price points. We'll be curious to see how many more years Lowe's stays at it.



Metrolina's staging area for bedding flats.

Bonus visits

North and South Carolina house some of the largest growing operations in the United States, and we couldn't visit the area without checking in on some of our friends. Besides, we never pass up an opportunity to tour greenhouses with Dr. Jim Barrett, University of Florida and GPN's consulting editor.

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ANLA PARTNERS WITH JAPAN NURSERYMEN'S ASSOCIATION

American Nursery & Landscape Association (ANLA) has developed a new affiliation with the Japan Nurserymen's Association (JNA). A delegation of more than 17 members from the JNA were in attendance for the announcement at ANLA's 2003 Convention & Learning Retreat held July 16-20, 2003 (Find out more about the retreat in the September 2003 issue of *GPN*), including JNA President Tsutomu Hataya and Ristuko Nomura from the Agricultural Trade Office in Osaka, Japan. Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney and Doug Gillespie, commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural

Resources, also presided over the partnership ceremony. The event formalizes the relationship between the two national associations and will aid in the further development of horticultural trade between the two countries.

The partnership grew out of increased trading between U.S. green industry firms and



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We visited all of the regular sites, Stacey’s Greenhouses, which showed us they’re amazing new shipping logistics program (Look for more information on it in an upcoming issue of *GPN*.); Van Wingerden International with all of its automation; and a small operation many of you may not be familiar with, Lakeshore Greenhouses, a subsidiary of a Canadian-owned company by the same name.

We were also lucky enough to get a tour of the newly renamed Costa Carolina, Leicester, N.C., the old Velvet Ridge facility that was recently purchased by Costa Color. Costa is using their new “Northern” location to produce some of the material that’s harder to grow in Miami such as fall pansies, mums and poinsettias, as well as shipping material as far south as the Atlanta market for a substantial freight savings.

The last place we couldn’t help but mention is Metrolina Greenhouses, Metrolina, N.C. If you’ve never been there, it’s a sight to see. You round a turn in the road only to see acre upon acre of Van Wingerden glass houses with the roof vents wide open. While we were there, Metrolina was testing one of its newest inventions — an automated staging area for bedding flats. The cable support system is equipped with a sensor eye that detects when a flat has been removed from the row and initiates the drive to bring another flat into the terminal position. Metrolina expects to have the system up and running for spring.

We’d like to send a special thanks to our gracious hosts who took the time to show us around their places.

— *Carrie Burns and Bridget White*

Ralstonia Prevention Update

In a meeting, hosted by the USDA in Washington D.C., to review the recent Ralstonia quarantine, a number of major players in the geranium industry worked on steeling the ease of geranium growers and many others in the industry, so they can be optimistic about a safe future for imported cuttings.

Key goals for the future of the U.S. geranium industry were discussed during the review meeting, which included geranium breeding companies (the four original members: Ball FloraPlant, Fischer USA, Goldsmith Plants and Oglevee Ltd. and three new members: Dummen USA, Selecta First Class and Fides North America), USDA, Canadian and state governments, potato industry representatives and international scientists. The meeting, organized by USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), was designed to look back on the successes and failures of the recent quarantine — so that such a difficult quarantine will not have to happen again — and to look toward the future to ensure that imported cuttings remain available to U.S. growers.

In the meeting, the USDA held its commitment to continue allowing geranium cuttings to be imported because approximately 80 percent of the \$300 million farm gate geranium industry originates in cuttings produced overseas. APHIS will continue to work with the geranium industry to establish an official

clean stock certification program, which is expected to be in place by late summer, prior to the 2004 shipping season.

On the industry's part of the meeting, geranium breeding companies are making major investments in tightened sanitation and shipping protocols to ensure clean stock and accurate tracing of cuttings.

This ongoing endeavor represents a very strong effort of communication and cooperation among APHIS, the geranium industry and the scientific community and has several major thrusts: establishment of a clean stock certification program; improved ability to trace cuttings back to the source and forward to the whole-sale customer; strong investment in research; improved testing procedures; improved grower education; continued cooperation with the potato industry, the tomato industry and other potentially impacted segments of U.S. agriculture; and continued efforts to obtain compensation for greenhouse growers who were required to destroy crops.

OAN
Changes Name

In a move towards making their name more politically correct, the Oregon Association of Nurserymen voted to change its name to Oregon Association of Nurseries. According to the association, Oregon is one of the last organizations in the industry to change its name from the word "nurserymen" to a more gender-friendly term. The association is planning on debuting the new name and logo at the Farwest Show in Portland, Ore., with seminars sponsored by GPN, *Lawn & Garden Retailer* and Proven Winners, on August 21-23. For more information, call the Oregon Association of Nurseries at (800) 342-6401.

Unemployment
Numbers Rise

According to a recent report from the U.S. Department of Labor, the number of unemployed people in the United States has increased by 360,000 in June to a total of 9.4 million, rising from 6.1 to 6.4 per-

cent. Since March, the number of unemployed people in the country has increased by 913,000. The report also stated that the rate for adult men went up for the third month in a row, to 6.1 percent,

which is 0.8 percent higher than it was in March. Also interesting was the teenage unemployment rate, at 19.3 percent, which is up since the beginning of the year. During the last month, the unemployment rate

for African Americans increased to 11.8 percent. Other major work group rates include: adult women at 5.2 percent, whites at 5.5 percent, Hispanics 8.4 percent and Asians was 7.8 percent. ♦

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industry news

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Japanese firms over the past few years. Because of the increased interest in each country’s nursery stock, the ANLA Board of Directors voted to establish a relationship with the JNA to initiate visits among U.S. green industry

businesses and Japanese firms, improve trading among the two countries and begin a student exchange program. Before this alliance, the Japanese market was largely unexplored by U.S. suppliers as

an outlet for nursery products. As a result, Japanese nurserymen did not know much about the U.S. nursery industry, nor did U.S. nurserymen know much about the Japanese industry. Currently, The Netherlands is the dominant supplier of ornamental plant products to the Japanese market and holds more than 90 percent of the Japanese market for imported nursery products

Other ANLA News

In other ANLA news, members John C. Watkins, Virginia State senator and president of Watkins Nursery, Midlothian, Va., and Bob Carden, president of Carden & Sprott Insurance Inc., Winter Haven, Fla., testified before the House of Representatives’ Agriculture Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management on July 10. Both Sen. Watkins and Carden highlighted the need for changes to USDA’s crop insurance program as it applies to the nursery industry.

A major focus of their testimony was the fact that the nursery industry requires an efficient, affordable and sustainable crop insurance program. Currently, the crop insurance program falls short of adequately addressing the diversity and unique situations presented in an industry that grows thousands of varieties using an array of production systems and technologies.

A major shortcoming of the program that Watkins’ testimony addressed was providing coverage for trees and plants that fall within a quarantine zone — especially if those green goods are rendered un-saleable because of infestation by a quarantine pest or ordered destroyed. Quarantines are sometimes imposed while studying and assessing the extent of the infestation and risk of harm.

Fides Adds New Rooting Stations

Fides North America has increased its number of U.S. rooting stations to 10. All of its unrooted cuttings are shipped from Fides Plants in Costa Rica to the U.S. stations. The original plants for the cuttings are originally from Fides Goldstock Breeding in The Netherlands.

ENERGY CRISIS 2003



According to the July 21, 2003 issue of *Time* magazine, in an article on the 2003 energy crisis, the United States is running out of energy. As we all know, gas prices are rising more and more every day, and that should be a major concern for all growers in the United States. There is less of a natural gas supply than there was 10 years ago, and there are less means of filling up the tank. Additionally, there is a decrease in crude-oil production; in fact, according to the article, there has not been such an energy problem since the 1970s. No one is offering bargains on gasoline or related products, so the prices are really starting to affect the economy. The question is, what is our industry going to do to get by — how are we going to heat our greenhouses?

It would be nice to use hydrogen power or solar power as an alternative source, but that will work better for automobiles than it will for heating a greenhouse. Heating homes and businesses may lead to extreme bills, forcing people to rethink the amount of heat they will be using this winter. Winter is not that far away, so growers need to start thinking of ways to keep their greenhouses heated without paying an arm and a leg.

Within the next few weeks, the Senate is expected to approve a hydrogen alternative bill for vehicles, but again, how will that help growers? There is talk about using more coal or even nuclear power to generate electricity. Time will tell as to where the government will take us and the new plans they will work hard on devising in order to make U.S. citizens more at ease when the gas bill comes every month.

In the coming months, *GPN* will be watching the U.S. energy crisis and updating you on all of the late breaking news and tips on how you can better prepare for such a massive shortage. Keep your eyes open and tuned to this section for these regular updates and to see how this significant problem may cause us to start stringing electric blankets over our poinsettias. [GPN](#)

August

15-19: Garden Writers Association Annual Symposium
Chicago, Ill.
(703) 257-1032
www.gwaa.org

15-17: Nursery/Landscape Expo
Dallas, Texas
www.txnla.org

20: Griffin Greenhouse and Nursery Supplies Open House
Tewksbury, Mass.
(978) 851-4346

20-23: CalScape Expo 2003
Irvine, Calif.
(707) 462-2276
www.cipaweb.org

21-23: Farwest Show and Seminars sponsored by GPN, Lawn & Garden Retailer and Proven Winners
Portland, Ore.

(503) 653-8733
www.farwestshow.com

September

18-19: Southwest Horticultural Trade Show and Conference
Phoenix, Ariz.
(480) 966-1610

18-21: ANLA Grower Tour
Virginia
(202) 789-2900
www.anla.org

21-23: GLEE International Garden and Leisure Exhibition
Birmingham, England
www.gleebirmingham.com

24-27: Society of American Florists (SAF) Annual Convention
Boca Raton, Fla.
(703) 836-8700
www.safnow.org

October

8-11: International Plant

Propagators' Society Western Region Meeting
Portland, Ore.
(503) 662-3244
jim.mcconnell@baileynursery.com

16-17: NGMA Fall Meeting
Tampa, Fla.
(800) 792-6462
www.ngma.com

17-18: Xeriscape Conference 2003
Albuquerque, N.M.
(505) 468-1021
www.xeriscapem.com

November

5-8: Horti Fair
Amsterdam, The Netherlands
www.rai.nl

12-15: ASCFG's National Convention and Trade Show
Vancouver, BC, Canada
(440) 774-2887
www.ascfg.org

January 2004

14-16: Mid-America Horticultural Trade Show
Chicago, Ill.
(847) 526-2010
www.midam.org

15-17: TPIE
Fort Lauderdale, Fla.
(800) 375-3642
www.fnga.org.

22-25: ANLA Management Clinic
Louisville, Ky.
(202) 789-2900.
www.anla.org

29-1: IPM
Essen, Germany
www.messe,essen.de

Save the Date:

April 18-20, 2004
AHMA Hardware Show
Chicago, Ill.
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www.ahmaharwareshow.com