

NEWS on the GROW

compiled by Catherine Evans



FROM OFA TO YOU

By John Holmes

It happens every year — you walk through the doors at the OFA Short Course, completely amazed by the size and scope of the event. The Short Course is certainly not short on things to do, people to see and business to conduct.

Much happens before you arrive. When the OFA staff arrives at the Greater Columbus Convention Center, it's quiet, with dark corners, an empty concourse and a concrete trade show floor. It takes several days to transform this empty space into a showcase of plants, flowers and floriculture products.

It takes a great deal to host more than 10,000 floriculture industry professionals. The Short Course starts on a Saturday, but the staff moves in the previous Tuesday. By Wednesday, there are many volunteers arriving to set-up; and by Saturday, the full contingent of more than 80 volunteers is on duty helping with decorations, registration, sessions and tours.

Each year, more than 100 companies donate products for decorations and retail design at Short Course. A team of nearly 20 people create decorations for the event, and almost as many people process materials for the retail design sessions.

This year, flowers left from the retail design program will be used to bring "Flowers to the People." The Ohio Teleflora Unit will be participating in the National "Make Someone Smile Week," delivering flowers to nursing homes, hospitals and group homes.

TRADE SHOW

In the trade show hall, booth locations are marked, draping is set to divide the area and freight is delivered to booths. By Friday, exhibitors get into their spots to arrange plant material and set up their displays. This year, more than 500 companies will be exhibiting in more than 1,300 booths on six acres of exhibit space, making it over four miles long.

At this year's Short Course, at least 68 new companies will be exhibiting; international participation includes 44 Canadian companies and 25 from outside North America; and the largest exhibitor has 36 booth spaces.

THE EVENT

The Short Course is one of the largest conventions in the city of Columbus. For 2003, more than 10,000 hotel rooms have been blocked at 13 Columbus-area hotels for the event. While attendees stayed in Columbus during the 2002 Short Course, they spent nearly \$6 million.

This year's program includes 130 educational sessions, a new OFA Bookstore and P. Allen Smith as the keynote speaker (sponsored by The Flower Fields). Smith, a noted gardening expert, author and television personality, will present his keynote address on Sunday, July 13 at 7:30 a.m. The keynote is open to all attendees with badges.

WRAPPING UP

When it's over, attendees take home new information, plans to implement in their own businesses, valuable new contacts and renewed relationships.

The OFA Short Course will be held this July 12-16 in Columbus, Ohio. OFA — an Association of Floriculture Professionals sponsors the OFA Short Course annually.

John Holmes is the executive director of OFA. He can be reached by phone at (614) 487-1117 or E-mail at jholmes@ofa.org.

Darwin Plants Offers New Marketing Program

Darwin Plants introduces a new branding and marketing program, Distinctly-Different, for new and unusual perennials. Special pot tags, bench talkers/cards and posters will be provided to promote the plants, along with a dedicated Web site that provides customers with extensive information about plants in the program, including growing tips from the hybridiser and the opportunity to take part in discussions. The program is designed to appeal to gardening enthusiasts interested in new and unusual varieties.

Coming to retail in spring 2004, Distinctly-Different will initially be comprised of 15 varieties. These will be reviewed annually and changed according to their suitability to the program. In order to qualify as Distinctly-Different, plants will have to have at least one unique characteristic and be available in limited quantities.

The 2004 selections include:

Caryopteris x clandonensis 'Summer Sorbet'

Delphinium 'Coral Sunset'

Delphinium 'Delft Blue'

Echinacea purpurea 'Razzmatazz'

Echinacea purpurea 'Vintage Wine'

Euphorbia 'Mini Martini'

Geranium 'Jolly Bee'

Geum 'Flames of Passion'

Heuchera 'Swirling Fantasy'

Hosta 'Christmas Candy'

Ligularia 'Laternchen'

Phlox 'Fancy Feelings'

Phlox 'Goldmine'

Phlox 'Natural Feelings'

Tradescantia 'Pink Chablis'



The Web site, www.distinctly-different.com, will be online in time for the start of the spring 2004 sales period. It will provide opportunities for browsers to post their own comments to published articles, and purchasers of Distinctly-Different varieties will be able to register their plant's serial number, enabling them to be listed on the sight as a distributor.



New Gene Could Produce Drought-Resistant Plants

Purdue University researchers may have found a gene that will help with the creation of drought-resistant plants. This gene controls production of a plant's outermost protective coating. Scientists have cloned the gene, called WAX2; it was discovered as a fast-wilting mutant of arabidopsis, a plant used commonly in experimentation.

The gene is directly associated with the synthesis of the cuticle, protective layer and contained waxes, of the plant. The mutated arabidopsis gene has a different cuticle structure than is found in the unmutated gene. Researchers believe that if they can alter the new gene they might be able to produce a cuticle much thicker and more rigid, making it less permeable to water loss, allowing plants to be able to survive in drought conditions.

Currently, the research results are positive. However, researchers are still in the learning stages, meaning it will take some time before the results tell whether the gene will be successful or not.

NENA Gets a New President

Jeff Huntington, co-owner of Pleasant View Gardens, Loudon, N.H., was recently named president of the New England Nursery Association (NENA). Huntington was



first elected as the New Hampshire Representative to the board of NENA in 1983 and is also the former NENA Treasurer. Huntington has also worked on the State Association Leadership and New England Nursery and Landscape Certification Council and is the chair of the Summer Expo 2003 committee.

Huntington participates in the New Hampshire Plant Growers Association (NHPGA) and the ANLA, where he helped bring the annual national convention to Boston for 2003. He has also been instrumental in serving as a liaison between the NHPGA and the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension Service.

Huntington and his family are heavily involved in running the family's greenhouse business, Pleasant View Gardens. Pleasant View Gardens is a producer of Proven Winners and Proven Selections young plants, as well as a supplier of finished plants. ♦

Companies Discuss Clean Stock Programs

Members of the Geranium Bacterial Disease Control Initiative, who represent Ball FloraPlant, Fischer USA, Goldsmith Plants and Oglevee, recently had a two-day meeting with USDA APHIS to discuss a permanent clean stock program for their plants. The program would allow inspecting and certifying geranium cuttings from overseas production sites. This program was originally initiated in April 2002, but the efforts to develop the program were delayed by the quarantine and eradication efforts of the recent *Ralstonia* infestation. Currently, SAF and ANLA are lobbying members of Congress for financial assistance for growers that are forced to destroy plant material affected by diseases.

Agriculture Summary Includes Floriculture

USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service has recently released the 2002 Floriculture Crops Summary results, stating that the total crop value for wholesale for growers with \$10,000 or more in sales is estimated at approximately \$4.9 billion, which is up 2 percent from 2001.

According to the summary, California is the leading production state, with crops valued at \$962 million — with a decrease of 4 percent from 2001. However, Florida makes up the 4 percent decline with \$877 million in wholesale. Florida and California account for 38 percent of the total value. Other states in the running are Michigan, Texas and Ohio; along with California and Florida, they make up approximately \$2.6 billion, which is 54 percent of the total value.

The number of growers for 2002 was at 10,216, which is 8 percent less than 2001 at 11,081. The amount of growers with sales of \$100,000 or more decreased to 4,612 from 4,738 in 2001. Growing operations with reported sales of \$20,000-49,999 increased while all other-size groups decreased.

The total growing area for 2002 is reported to be at 911 million sq.ft., making it 1 percent less than 2001. Greenhouse space for 2002 accounts for 58 percent of the total covered area with 531 million sq.ft., which is close to the same estimates from the previous year. However, plastic film structures are up 1 percent, to 368 million sq.ft.; fiberglass and other rigid plastic covers are down 5 percent; and glass greenhouse areas are also down 1 percent

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compared to 2001. Shade and temporary cover constitute the remaining 380 million sq.ft. of covered area, down 3 percent. Open ground totals are 36,906 acres, increasing 4 percent over the 2001 total.

It should be remembered that these numbers represent only part of the total U.S. floriculture industry, as surveys are not distributed in all 50 states.

New Aphid Found in Florida

Lance Osborne, an entomologist at the University of Florida/IFAS Mid-Florida Research and Education Center, reports a new Asian species of aphid discovered on *Ficus sp.* in March 2003. The aphid is a *Greenidea ficicola* Takahashi, Family Aphididae. The new aphid was identified by Susan Halbert (Division of Plant Industry at the University of Florida).

One of the identifying characteristics of this aphid is long siphunculi (cornicles), which are the tubular structures on each side of the abdominal tergum V or VI. Currently, there is not enough information on the pest to draw any conclusions about its significance in the industry. However, according to Osborne, with the recent introduction of pink hibiscus mealybug and a few other insects that are more damaging, preliminary readings on the aphid do not seem to be a major issue in the industry. For more information, go to the University of Florida's Pest Alert Web site at: <http://extlab7.entnem.ufl.edu/pestalert>.

ANLA Heads Up Letter Writing Campaign

More than 80 organizations representing labor-intensive agriculture operations across the country came together to send a letter to House Agriculture Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte (R-Va.), urging his support for comprehensive and bipartisan reform of the U.S. agricultural labor policy. People signing the letter represent the U.S. producers of fruits, vegetables, grain, fiber, poultry and livestock, dairy, nursery and greenhouse, turfgrass and Christmas tree crops.

Approximately 70 percent of these industries' labor forces is working in the United States without proper work authorization, according to Bob Vice, past president of the National Council of Agricultural Employers and co-chair of the Agriculture Coalition

for Immigration Reform (ACIR). Vice also adds, "To make matters worse, the 50-year-old 'H-2A' agricultural guest worker program is inefficient, unpredictable and unaffordable, which deprives producers of a functional way to source legal workers when insuf-

ficient domestic workers are available to meet seasonal needs."

A coalition of agricultural groups has been working with farm worker representatives over the past few years to come up with a comprehensive bipartisan approach to reforming the ◆

labor problem. The coalition is now seeking leadership and cooperation from members of Congress to enact legislation that would achieve some objectives. Included in the new model is giving experienced agricultural workers who pose no security

threat a one-time opportunity to become documented and earn permanent resident status over a period of 3-6 years. This would require workers to commit to future work in agriculture as a condition to eventual permanent legal status.

Hicks Nurseries Ranks 71

As Hicks Nurseries marks its 150th anniversary this year, *Family Business* magazine announced that the Westbury, N.Y., business is the 71st oldest family company in the United States and surpassed by only three others in the New York

metropolitan area. (The others include: Contigroup, global agribusiness; Henry W. T. Mali and Company, billiards fabrics; and Mager & Gougelman, manufacturers of artificial eyes and limbs.)

The magazine compiled a list of 102 companies that have remained owned and operated by the same family since at least 1865, and in some cases back as far as the early 17th century. All have operated for at least five generations, and some have a lot more behind them. Hicks Nurseries is in its sixth generation of family ownership, with Stephen Hicks as the current vice president of operations.

International Horti Fair Adds to 2003 Show

Extra activities and new pavilions are expected to increase the attractiveness of the International Horti Fair to be held November 5-8 in Amsterdam. In 2002, 55,000 people attended the show, and 40 percent of them came from more than 50 countries.

One of the new activities for 2003 is the International Congress on Greenhouse Technologies, Horticulture and Floriculture. This two-day congress aims particularly at foreign entrepreneurs in horticulture. The first day of the session will be focused on the greenhouse technology aspect in different climatic zones in the world. The second day will entail two sessions about floriculture and horticulture with an emphasis on marketing strategies that are used to put products and services on the market.

Another new project has to do with additions to the House of Plants. The exhibit will include a number of new plants. On the first day of the show, there will be an Innovation Award, granted by an international panel, given to the most promising novelties entered.

The Horti Fair is expecting a strong year for 2003, judging from the current amount of registrations that have been coming in. A number of people from the packing companies in ornamental plant cultivation, the associated supply industry and trade, and the technology sector of the industry are already showing a strong presence in the registration tallies. [GPN](#)

calendar

June

18-21: Southeast Greenhouse Conference
Greenville, S.C.
Contact: (877) 927-2775
www.sgcts.org

21-24: Seeley Conference
Ithaca, N.Y.
Contact: (607) 255-2166
www.hort.cornell.edu/seeleyconference

July

12-16: OFA Board and Committee Meetings
Columbus, Ohio
Contact: (614) 487-1117
www.ofa.org

12-16: OFA Short Course
Columbus, Ohio
Contact: (614) 487-1117
www.ofa.org

16-20: ANLA Convention and Executive Learning Retreat
Boston, Mass.
Contact: (202) 789-2900
www.anla.org

17-20: 6th Annual Meeting and Hyrdo-Mart Exhibition
New Orleans, La.
Contact: (703) 392-5890
www.hydromerchants.org

27-3: Perennial Plant Association Symposium
Sacramento, Calif.
Contact: (614) 771-8431
www.perennialplant.org

29-31: Penn. Allied Nursery Trade Show (PANTS)
Fort Washington, Pa.
Contact: (717) 238-1673
www.plna.com

31-2: Southern Nursery Association Trade Show
Atlanta, Ga.
Contact: (770) 953-4411
mail@mail.sna.org
www.sna.org

August

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

21-23: Farwest Show and Seminars sponsored by GPN, Lawn & Garden Retailer and Proven Winners
Portland, Ore.
Contact: (503) 653-8733
www.farwestshow.com

September

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

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

October

8-11: International Plant Propagators' Society Western Region Meeting
Portland, Ore.
Contact: (503) 662-3244
jim.mcconnell@baileynursery.com

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

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

November

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

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

January 2004

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