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Mark Your Calendars

For the *GPN* editorial staff, it seems like the California Pack Trials is a year-round event. We spend weeks planning to attend Pack Trials, we produce our annual Pack Trials Companion as well as our Pack Trials Zone on www.gpnmag.com, and then there are the eight days in six different hotels plus the 2,000 miles on the airplane and 1,000+ miles in the car visiting each and every stop. And then when we get back from California, we start writing for our June and July issues where we let you know about all the varieties and programs we saw during the trip. Obviously, it is a pretty big event for us.

So when I received an e-mail from the National Garden Bureau (NGB) in late June with the 2008 dates, I immediately pulled out my PDA and entered the information so I could start my planning. But next year's dates are a bit earlier than they have been in the last couple of years. In 2008, California Pack Trials will take place March 29-April 6. This is actually one week earlier than the original 2008 plans. This year, Pack Trials took place April 14-21.

According to the NGB, next year's dates were changed to accommodate many of the requests from growers and retailers. These growers and retailers said the dates in 2006 and 2007 were just too late into the spring growing season and they could not afford all of the time away from their operations. They want to attend Pack Trials, but they need to take care of their business, so they asked for the change.

Pack Trials is a massive undertaking for the breeders and marketing companies — and for attendees. But it is also a fantastic opportunity for growers and retailers to see what new varieties and trends they can expect to see in the coming year. So the earlier dates were scheduled.

I'd love to hear your thoughts on these earlier dates for next year. Drop me a line at thodson@sgcmail.com and let me know what you think.

In this issue, you will find Part 2 of our coverage of this year's Pack Trials including the varieties we thought really stood out. And remember you can always read about previous Pack Trials by going to the Zones section at www.gpnmag.com and clicking on "2007 Pack Trials."

AIB Is Just Around The Corner

Have you ever attended America in Bloom? If you haven't maybe this is the year you should. For the past six years, AIB has helped more than 130 municipalities across the United States improve the quality of life for their residents and visitors.


This year, the America in Bloom Symposium and Awards Program will take place Sept. 27-29, in Rockford, Ill.

America in Bloom is both a contest and a community development and educational program. Local communities compete to show the rest of the world what they are doing to improve their neighborhoods, while attendees have the chance to learn what works in other communities and how their unique ideas may be put into practice in their own town.

The competing towns are evaluated on their implementation of different floral displays, landscapes, urban forestry, turf and ground-cover areas, heritage conservation, environmental awareness, tidiness and community involvement.

In Rockford, where this year's theme is "Rock 'n Roll," participants will have the chance to take part in nine different learning tours to find creative inspiration to help beautify their neighborhoods and towns. There are also a wide variety of educational sessions that will provide attendees with the take-home knowledge they need to help improve their communities.

America in Bloom is a great way to help show off our industry. Attendees have the opportunity to really see how the products you grow in your greenhouse can benefit their communities. AIB is an excellent opportunity for you to get involved with these local municipalities and show them what you are all about.

If you would like to attend American in Bloom this year or participate in future AIB events, go to www.americainbloom.org for more information. 

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