

Goldsmith/Fischer Partnership

Fischer and Goldsmith Seeds, Inc. has announced a partnership, making Fischer the exclusive production, distribution, marketing and sales channel for all Goldsmith vegetative varieties in North America, Europe and Asia.

Goldsmith has licensed Fischer to produce and sell all of its vegetative products. "We are out of the vegetative market. We will continue to do breeding on vegetative and seed crops and will continue to produce and market seed crops," said Joel Goldsmith, president of Goldsmith. Over time, Goldsmith Plants will cease to exist as a separate company.

Goldsmith's entire line of vegetative varieties comes under this exclusive partnership, including such crops as impatiens, petunias, calibrachos, snapdragons, angelonia and verbena. Goldsmith's vegetative varieties will be offered through Fischer's existing broker networks and sales channels. Customer and technical support for all Goldsmith vegetative varieties will also be provided by Fischer.

"We will be increasing our technical service staff," said Gary Falkenstein, co-president of Fischer USA. "Our internal operation won't be affected much." The technical service additions will be needed with the expansion of the China facility. Fischer's certified China facility will be expanded to 28 acres to hold the Goldsmith geranium production. "The educated, motivated staff at the Shanghai facility is achieving great results in terms of productivity and plant quality," said Falkenstein. In addition, some ivy geraniums will be produced in Israel, and our Israel facility, along with our Portugal facility, will also house the other Goldsmith crops.



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GERANIUMS VS. GERANIUMS

The agreement brings the product lines of two of the world's leading geranium breeders together. When asked why Fischer would be interested in a competitor's geranium line, Goldsmith said, "We have been very successful with our lines, and Goldsmith and Fischer geraniums are very different. Fischer is known for more compact plants, and we are known for a more robust type. This whole arrangement grew out of Fischer's desire to help a friend in need and meshed with their goal to expand product offerings."

"Goldsmith offers some strong colors with good characteristics that Fischer does not have," added Falkenstein. "This will expand our availability." Falkenstein also believes Goldsmith's geranium customers are a loyal group with particular preferences. "It's almost like the automobile industry. People buy a certain model or type because they are comfortable with it and they trust it."

SOME RALSTONIA TALK

According to Goldsmith, there are two main reasons for the agreement:

1. Goldsmith thinks there is a perception in the industry that their geraniums are risky and that even if they get recertified, this perception will follow them.
2. After two years of horrendous liability, Goldsmith cannot take the risk of shipping geraniums into the U.S. market — not until APHIS has a better plan for testing and handling future occurrences.

Falkenstein wants the industry to keep a few things in mind:

- Production in China is high tech and disease free.
- Goldsmith is world-renowned for its breeding.
- Fischer's worldwide locations are extremely interconnected, allowing instant communication.
- Fischer prides itself in its helpful customer service, throughout any problem.

Goldsmith still has outstanding accounts receivable and payable and wants to conclude all business related to the Ralstonia occurrence before dissolving the company. Goldsmith stressed that this agreement does not mean Goldsmith Plants is going bankrupt — they are not — and that they do not see this as a way to eliminate their responsibility to growers affected by Ralstonia.

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Container Stock Inspections Set

Members of the American Nursery and Landscape Association (ANLA), the Society of American Florists (SAF) and OFA have met to examine the issue of the industry's compliance with existing weights and measures regulations. Members met in response to the regulatory focus on garden retailers in Pennsylvania within the last year.

According to ANLA, weights and measures regulations specify ways that quantity is communicated to the retail consumer in the form of advertising, signage and labeling. Existing regulations require change in the ways information is currently communicated. Beyond size and volume, the regulations do not appear to require significant changes in current manufacturing or production practices.

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA) and the Pennsylvania Landscape and Nursery Association (PLNA) have been working since June 2003 to resolve issues surrounding the sale of hanging baskets and flowerpots and the amount of stock these

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Million Bells Wins Calibrachoa Trial

Two varieties of the Suntory Flowers, Ltd. Million Bells series, marketed in the U.S. by Jackson & Perkins Wholesale, Inc., have been awarded the Award of Garden Merit (AGM) for Trial of Calibrachoa 2003 by the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS).

In 2003, various companies in the United Kingdom, Germany and The Netherlands submitted 46 entries to the RHS. Only four entries were awarded the AGM. Two varieties of the Million Bells series — Trailing Pink and Trailing Magenta — were included in the four award-winning varieties of 2003.

Besides being one of the highest accolades the RHS can give to a garden plant, the AGM provides practical value for the ordinary gardener. Every AGM plant must be of outstanding quality for ordinary garden decoration or use. It must be of good constitution and available from nurseries, seed suppliers or specialist growers. It must not require highly specialist growing conditions or care and cannot be particularly susceptible to pests or diseases. It also must not be subject to reversion in its vegetative or floral characteristics.

Suntory positions its flowers as "something that enriches people's lives and enhances mental health. We have succeeded in creating new flowers that bloom beautifully, bloom profusely and bloom in three seasons."

Suntory has been awarded with the AGM for two consecutive years. They have also won in the Petunia Trials for four varieties of Surfinia petunias, a vegetatively propagated trailing petunia.

Lou Aguirre, marketing and license manager for Jackson & Perkins Wholesale, Inc. said, "We take pride in the fact that cultivars bred by Suntory continue to win awards all around the world and continue to bring to market new, different, unusual and high-quality vegetative plant varieties."



'Million Bells Trailing Magenta'

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FUTURE MARKETING

The 10-year arrangement calls for all Goldsmith vegetative products to be sold by Fischer and identified, for example in the Fischer catalog, as bred by Goldsmith. This means that all the Goldsmith vegetative material will remain under The Flower Fields brand, and in that respect, consumers and some garden centers will not even know of this change.

At Pack Trials, former Goldsmith Plants' material was in the Fischer section. Fischer USA distributed a supplemental catalog displaying all Goldsmith Geraniums including new varieties for the 2005 season. Goldsmith's other vegetative annuals are included in Fischer's spring plants catalog.

SAF Makes Headway for Pest Management

Despite the rainy weekend, SAF's 2004 Pest Management Conference, held at the Doubletree Hotel in San Jose, Calif., February 20-22, was a hit amongst growers all over the country.

The event started out with a great report from Ann Chase of Chase Research Gardens about the new fungicides that have been trailed within the past year. That was just a starter to an interesting weekend filled with talk about downy mildew, new disease identification, methyl bromide, new and emerging pests, thrips, tospoviruses, APHIS procedures and much more. Some of the featured speakers included Mary Hausbeck from Michigan State University; Steve Newman from Colorado State University; Kevin Heinz from Texas A&M University; Lance Osborne from University of Florida; Jim Bethke from the University of California, Riverside and more. The sessions were full of useful information for all attendees to take home and use in their greenhouses.

There were a number of presentations from companies that exhibited their products at the conference to let attendees see all of the new and exciting pest management solutions in the United States. On Saturday, February 21, after a morning of seminars, the group headed to Watsonville, Calif., for a tour of three facilities.

The first stop for my bus was Pacific Plug and Liner, where we saw the production and operation of plugs as a number of different plants were getting ready for spring. The next stop was to Rose Gene Technology, a cut rose grower, where we were able to see how roses are grown and the process they go through to be shipped and sold. The last stop of the day took us to the Plant Sciences facility where we were given wonderful strawberries, a tour of their fruit (strawberries, raspberries, etc.) growing facility as well as an interesting talk about the company and its relationship with the biologicals company, Biobest Biological Systems.

The weekend turned out to be full of great information, networking opportunities and a fun time. I would like to thank SAF for the great opportunity and all of the sponsors of the conference for an educating and exciting weekend in San Jose. For information on next year's conference, contact SAF at (800) 336-4743 or visit www.safnow.org.

— Catherine Evans

H-2B Reaches 2004 Cap

The Department of Homeland Security's Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) announced that as of March 10, 2004, it will no longer accept H-2B petitions containing requests to start work prior to October 1, 2004. It has already met the congressionally mandated cap of 66,000 workers.

According to an article in the *Arizona Daily Star*, this is the first time CIS has enforced a pre-existing quota of 66,000. However, CIS officials say that limit has always been technically upheld because the total number included thousands of visas approved by immigration services. "The cap itself has never been exceeded," Chris Bently, spokesman for CIS, told the *Arizona Daily Star*.

According to CIS, the program will adjudicate petitions received on or before March 9, 2004 in the order in which they were received. "CIS is not suspending premium processing, and normal rules applicable to cases subject to premium processing will still apply."

CIS will return all petitions subject to the annual cap that are filed after March 9, 2004. This includes the filing fee and, if applicable, the premium processing fee. Applicants may reapply with a new starting date of October 1, 2004 or later.

According to American Nursery and Landscape Association (ANLA), amendments to previously approved petitions and petitions for extension of stay are not affected by the cap. Employers petitioning to extend the stay of a current H2-B worker, change or add employers to a current H-2B worker, or change the terms of employment for a current H-2B worker will have their petitions processed. ANLA stated, "The fact that the cap has been hit so early this year underscores the urgent need for comprehensive immigration reform."

Gerald Burns, an immigration law attorney, discussed the visa cut with *Arizona Daily Star*. "In a nutshell, it's going to deny employers access to critically needed workers. Those industries who have a reliance on H-2B workers — landscapers, resorts, ranchers — are really going to struggle."

'Misty' named Ivy of the Year 2005

American Ivy Society (AIS) awarded Ivy of the Year 2005 to *Hedera helix* 'Misty.'

Misty is a variegated, miniature, Bird's Foot ivy in the Pierot Classification system. It was found as a mutation of *Hedera helix* 'Needlepoint' in the late 1970s. Ivies are called Bird's Foot when the shape of their leaves resembles the track a bird's foot makes in the snow.

The leaves of Misty have five narrow lobes in various shades of green and gray-green with a thin white margin and white veins. Under low temperatures, the white is diffused with a pink blush. It is winter hardy,

surviving to at least -20° F. Misty does well in the sun, but does not lose its variegation in the shade, so it will also do well in darker areas of the garden.

Its self-branching habit and small leaves make Misty well suited for pots, hanging baskets and

topiaries. In fact, according to AIS, Misty is one of the top six ivies used by professional growers for both large and small topiaries because it tends to be very consistent in leaf size throughout the year and, with little adjustment, does well in full sun situations.

A committee made up of members of AIS, nurserymen and growers across the United States choose the winner of the award that must complete a three-year trial period in the Society's test gardens and commercial nurseries. ♦



'Misty' (Photo courtesy of American Ivy Society)

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The Ivy of the Year is selected for its attractiveness, ease of growth and multi-purpose uses. According to AIS, the ivy must be suitable for both interior use and exterior home landscaping. It must be beautiful, lush and noninvasive in a garden.

AIS is dedicated to the education and promotion of the genus *Hedera*. Because of the rising popularity of ivy as a pot and garden plant, AIS initiated the annual Ivy of the Year program in 2001, with *Hedera helix* 'Lady Frances.' The winners since then have been *Hedera helix* 'Golden Ingot' 2002, 'Teardrop' 2003 and 'Duck Foot' 2004.

The American Ivy Society is offering a Seal of Verification for ivy that has come from a grower whose stock has been identified and verified as being true to name. The seal may be used on

ivy labels so that wholesalers, retailers and gardeners will know that the ivy they have purchased has the correct name. Because ivy readily tends to revert, ivy stock should be verified every 3-5 years to keep it accurate.

FIRST Scholarship Program

Floriculture Industry Research and Scholarship Trust (FIRST) announced that this year it will be offering 25 scholarships geared towards supporting students who have career goals in specific areas of the floriculture industry, including production, research, business, marketing and public gardens.

FIRST is a nonprofit organization with over 40 years of experience serving the floriculture industry. It supports floriculture scholarships

and research across the United States and Canada. According to FIRST, the scholarships encourage horticulture students to continue family businesses and to join horticulture firms as growers and innovators. Scholarships are offered to graduate, undergraduate and vocational students who have a major or minor in horticulture or a related field and those who maintain a 3.0 grade point average.

In 2003, the FIRST Scholarship Program awarded \$20,000 in scholarships to 17 students studying horticulture throughout the United States. Each scholarship is named to recognize leaders and firms within the horticulture industry. Some of the scholarships are: the Ball Horticultural Company Scholarship, awarded to students pursuing a career in commercial

floriculture; the Richard E. Barrett Scholarship, awarded to students pursuing a career in research and/or education; and the Harold Bettinger Memorial Scholarship, awarded to students with a major/minor in business or marketing with the intent to apply it to a horticulture-related field.

All scholarships range from \$500 to \$2,000. Applications for this year's scholarships must be submitted by May 1, 2004. Students may submit their applications, along with transcripts, letters of recommendation and other relevant materials to: Scholarship Applications, Floriculture Industry Research and Scholarship Trust (FIRST), P.O. Box 280, East Lansing, MI 48826-0280, or at www.firstinfloriculture.org/scholarships.htm. ♦

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containers hold. The issue of increased enforcement of marketing regulations, originally set to begin November 1, 2003, was postponed until April 1, 2004.

According to PLNA, Pennsylvania regulations require container advertisements and labels to accurately reflect the exact measure of the actual container volume. This includes references to "gallon" and "quart" nursery containers and other pots using Imperial measure that do not actually contain that measure. Nursery stock specifications that reference only an Imperial volume measurement are not in accordance with the American National Standards Institute. Furthermore, containers marketed or sold that indicate a "trade" or "number" designation must have volumes within the ranges shown in order to comply with the standard.

According to ANSI Z-60 Standards, if growers, buyers or specifiers include dimension measurements or Imperial volume references, "they are encouraged to also specify 'round' or 'square' and to reference the appropriate container classification in the Container Class Table in order to assure adequate soil volume in the container." For instance, a pot that is advertised or labeled 4½ inches must accurately measure 4½ inches on one of its sides if it is square and at the top of the inside diameter if it is round.

Containers are not required to have a label, but if it does, the label must indicate the correct measure or volume of the container. "For example, don't advertise or label a '1 gal. rhododendron' if its pot does not hold a gallon," says Lisa C. Nicholas, director of government relations for PLNA. "Advertise or label it as a '#1 pot rhododendron' if in fact the pot is a #1 pot according to the American National Standards Institute."

ANLA contacted the National Institute of Standards and Technologies (NIST) in the summer of 2003 to discuss the national ramifications of Pennsylvania's actions. Both ANLA and NIST will be working together to provide the green industry with guidelines and a timeline for full compliance nationally that respects the economic implications for the industry.

Nicholas has stated that the PDA has issued an official notice to the industry on its Web site with regard to this matter. "There has not been legislative action or changes to the regulations; rather, the PDA issued this alert in order to ensure compliance with the current Pennsylvania regulations." To see the official notice go to www.plna.com.

Sakata, Ecke Join for Osteo Breeding

Sakata Ornamentals Europe has acquired the osteospermum Cape Daisy breeding program from Ecke Europe, as of March 12, 2004.

The cooperation between the Paul Ecke Ranch and Sakata is a continuation of over five years of marketing and breeding between the two companies. "I deeply value what we and Sakata have accomplished, a true case of synergy between organizations," said Paul Ecke, III, CEO of Ecke Ranch.

Marketing and promotion in Europe will be led by a committee of Sakata Ornamentals Europe, the European marketing organization of the Ecke Ranch in the United States. Grower distribution will be via the European distribution of Sakata Ornamentals Europe and the nominated licensees.

Plants in North America are marketed by Ecke within The Flower Fields program and will include the three new colors of Crescendo *Osteospermum x dimorphothea*, new heat-tolerant Side Show osteospermum, the day-neutral Colorburst PRO calibrachoa and portulaca Yubi Summer Joy series.

The cooperation will allow the continuation of the breeding program for the Cape Daisy series after the retirement of Carl Sorensen, who will still act as a consultant. Niels Kristensen, the current breeder of the series, will join the Sakata team.

"By combining the Cape line with the Osteospermum Side, Side Show and Crescendo series of Sakata, we believe many exciting new osteospermum will be created for years to come," stated Sakata.

"Ecke Ranch is very excited about this program. We are taking two great breeding lines and putting them under one roof. All of us are doing what we do best, and the result should be a win for growers and consumers," said Laurie Scullin, marketing director for Ecke Ranch. GPN