

SUNTORY GOES UNROOTED

The Suntory Collection, marketed in the United States by Jackson & Perkins Wholesale, Inc. (JPW), will now be offering unrooted cuttings to eight select brokers. The cuttings will come from Plant Source International in Cuernavaca, Mexico, and Oro Farms in Guatemala.

"All of this time, Suntory has been very reluctant to get into the unrooted cuttings business," said Lou Aguirre, marketing and license manager for JPW. "We had always maintained that the only way to go to market was to sell rooted liners using the Suntory licensed-propagator network. However, we recognized that other competing breeders have made their varieties available as unrooted cuttings in the market. We had lost a lot of sales, especially with the larger growers. We decided it was about time to develop a program while at the same time we can ensure quality and consistency."

Twenty varieties of plants have been selected, all of which are older than four years. A minimum order will be 5,000 cuttings, which restricts the offer to volume growers. The unrooted cuttings will be available through the following brokers:

- Ball Seed Co., West Chicago, Ill.
- Yoder Brothers, Inc., Barberton, Ohio
- Eason Horticultural Resources, Crestview, Ky.
- McHutchison, Ridgefield, N.J.
- Fred C. Gloeckner & Co., Inc., Harrison, N.Y.
- Syngenta Seeds, Inc., Downers Grove, Ill.
- Western Horticultural Products, Inc. (WeHOP), Sequim, Wash.
- JVK Sales, Lachine, Quebec City, Canada.

"I think in the past, rooted liners were very difficult to find, simply because we didn't have enough rooting facilities. Today, we have 23 propagators in North America, making rooted liners more easily available," said Aguirre. "Nevertheless, I think the unrooted cuttings will be very easy to get simply because we've forecasted a very high production to anticipate the demand. It's a lot easier to control."

The program was designed to not only make Suntory products available to a wider audience in the North American market, but to also protect the Suntory licensed propagators of rooted liners, while meeting the needs of the large wholesale growers. "There are many new species that are coming out every year that hopefully will continue to generate a lot of interest in Suntory products," said Aguirre. "We are protecting the new varieties that are probably the most exciting varieties. They are exciting and creative and different from other products on the market. There is a need for the newer varieties to become well established. Naturally, they need a maturation

process. After 3-4 years, we will know if they are going to be standard items."

According to Aguirre, the eight licensed brokers will be the ones selling the cuttings to the growers. The brokers will take the orders from the growers and send them to JPW. In turn, JPW will process the orders and tell the production facility to ship them.

When selecting which brokers to use, Aguirre said many factors were considered: geography, finances, the quality of the organizations and the competing products that the organizations currently represent. "There might have been other brokers we could have gone with, but maybe the conflict of product representation was too strong, so we decided not to," said Aguirre.

The 20 Suntory varieties offered in this program are:

- Million Bells Cherry Pink, Terra Cotta, Trailing Blue, Trailing Pink and Yellow
- Surfinia Brilliant Pink/Purple, Lime, Pink Veined, Sky Blue, Violet #3 and White
- Tapien Blue-Violet, Pink and Salmon
- Temari Bright Pink, Bright Red, Patio Blue, Patio Rose, Violet and White

The varieties will be available in early fall of this year. Aguirre expects orders to start shipping out by week 50, but brokers have already started taking orders. "I believe this program will enhance Suntory product sales, not only at the unrooted level, but also at the rooted level," assured Aguirre. "The unrooted cuttings program will increase the sales to larger growers who would normally not buy Suntory products. At the same time, it will hopefully enhance the value of rooted liners."

Fischer/Goldsmith Partnership Gets Fishy

If you were lucky enough to attend the 2004 OFA Short Course this past July 10-13, you may have noticed the cartoon-like fish at the Fischer USA booth, on its advertisements and in other marketing materials. The little swimmer you were looking at is the symbol for the new Goldfish marketing program.

Fischer USA introduced the Goldfish product line at the Short Course on a 10- x 14-foot projector screen featuring the animated Goldfish swimming around the "world's best vegetative genetics."

Goldfish, which combines the names Goldsmith and Fischer, represents high-quality varieties that are now available to customers through the long-term strategic partnership between Fischer and Goldsmith Plants announced in March. The partnership made Fischer the exclusive production, distribution, marketing and sales channel for all Goldsmith vegetative varieties in North America, Europe and Asia.



Marketing Winner Announced

The 2004 GPN/MasterTag Marketing Innovation Award was presented on July 12, 2004 at the GPN/Lawn & Garden Retailer reception during this year's OFA Short Course. Industry leaders gathered to congratulate Elzinga & Hoeksema Greenhouses, Portage, Mich. Roger Rosenthal, executive production manager at Elzinga & Hoeksema, was there to receive the award and a few gifts. The program, Tropical Flavors: Backyard Tropical Escape, was chosen for its focus — create a stress-free, vacation-like atmosphere in the backyard. You can read more about the program in the June 2004 issue of GPN.

Elzinga & Hoeksema can now add this award to its resume. You could too; if you are interested in applying for next year's revamped marketing award, make sure your company's marketing/merchandising program is introduced to the retail market prior to entering the competition. Entries are due by December 31, 2004 and are now being accepted. For consideration, contact Carrie Burns at (847) 391-1019 or cburns@sgcmail.com.



Roger Rosenthal accepts the award presented by GPN's managing editor Carrie Burns.

The Goldfish product line encompasses more than 200 plants, including Goldsmith geraniums and spring annuals and Fischer geraniums and New Guinea impatiens.

According to Gary Falkenstein, co-president of Fischer USA, "Karl Trellinger (co-president of Fischer USA), Harvey Lang

(technical advisor of Fischer USA) and I were sitting around the conference table at our agency shortly after all of the Goldsmith vegetative material got added to our basket. Our business had changed dramatically — overnight. We were all trying to get our hands around a lot of issues, among them catalogs, production and the who's who of the varieties: 'That one is bred by Goldsmith...that one by Fischer...no that one is not Fischer, it is Goldsmith'. This went on for some time, then from somewhere Goldfish came out in the mix of conversations. We used Goldfish, internally for a few weeks and it worked, but we still had difficulty communicating the product line and the business

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externally. We tested the concept with some customers and sales reps, and it was well received — why not? Besides, the little Goldfish is fun."

According to Fischer, Goldfish stands for Fischer's commitment to continually better serve its customers with:

- The highest quality genetics delivered through the best production, distribution and marketing in the industry;
- Proven reliability in production with all of Goldsmith geraniums being produced at Fischer's 32-acre, Ralstonia-free, certified production facilities in China and Israel;
- Friendly and knowledgeable customer service that has a proven record of quick response time and immediate solutions;
- Fast, reliable technical advice from a customer-oriented team with more than 80 years of combined worldwide experience;

- Real-time availability through its new Web site, www.fischerusa.com, which was designed with the grower and broker in mind and also features cultural information, diagnostics, growing guidelines and more; and

- Ease of doing business through simplified ordering of a broad range of varieties from a single source.

When asked if this program would affect anything under The Flower Fields marketing partnership, Falkenstein stated, "Goldfish is not a marketing program to the retailer or the consumer. It is a marketing program to the industry — to the grower and to the broker sales representatives. Goldfish is about the products of the two companies and about the reliability, customer service and after-sales service the growers and broker sales reps have come to

expect from Fischer." He added, "We are keeping everything in The Flower Fields. The Flower Fields is an alliance — very much like the Star Alliance of the airlines. There is a lot of cooperation; there is also healthy competition. Fischer will support any and all Flower Fields-branded programs with The Flower Fields tags. The non-Flower Fields programs will all get Fischer tags with a little GoldFisch and a big name for the variety."

In some final words from Falkenstein, "We are concentrating on the 'Nuts and Bolts' of running a great business here at Fischer. As in the book *Good to Great* our hedgehog principle is to be the best in grower/broker support! We can do this because we have great genetics, the best people and state-of-the-art systems to support their efforts. This is what we want the industry to think of when they see the GoldFisch."

Weights and Measures Makes Associations Opponents

ANLA AND SAF

A joint task force convened by the American Nursery & Landscape Association (ANLA) and the Society of American Florists (SAF) is studying existing regulations regarding consumer product labeling. The task force was convened following the call for increased enforcement of consumer product labeling laws by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA) last year. Over the past several months, through research and meetings with regulatory policy officials, the task force has gained a clearer understanding of existing consumer product labeling laws.

Commenting on the research, task force co-chair, Dave Fujino of Hines Horticulture, Irvine, Calif., ♦

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stated, "It was interesting to discover that these consumer product labeling regulations have been in place for over 10 years. The industry has been out of compliance for years. Due to our success (we are now an \$80 billion dollar industry)

our industry is coming under heavier regulatory scrutiny."

The task force has met several times with representatives of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) to seek clarification on the practical appli-

cation of these regulations. NIST is the national body responsible for setting consumer product labeling policy. These policies are adopted and enforced at the state and local level by weights and measures departments. Currently there are

approximately 550 different weights and measures jurisdictions in the United States. NIST authorities explained that while there are many detailed regulations, there are several key requirements of the law:

- Consumers must be able to compare similar products.

- The federal labeling law requires consumer product packaging and/or companion signage to provide the following information in a manner easily accessed and understandable to the average consumer:

1. A declaration of identity: what the product is.

2. A declaration of net contents: the size, quantity or count of the product offered for sale at the identified price.

3. A declaration of responsibility: who produced the product and where that business is located.

- All measurements must be stated in both metric and imperial (inch/pound/ounce) units.

"My initial fear was that these regulations would require our business and this industry to significantly change our practices, container size, trays, racks and trucking," says Fujino. "Now, having studied the regulations and spoken with the officials at NIST, it is clear that existing regulations require only that we change the information that we label our plants with." Those laws allow the required information to appear on container labels, stick tags, hang tags or localized signage.

The task force is discussing its research during the summer trade shows. Their goal is to release compliance assistance guidelines in early fall of this year. Task force members will be discussing their research, answering questions and gathering feedback at the summer trade shows and events. For more information contact ANLA at (202) 789-2900.

NAHSA

During its 17th Annual Meeting held in June, The North American Horticultural Supply Association's (NAHSA) board of directors created a Weights and Measures Task Force in response to concerns expressed by distributor members about compliance recommendations for existing weights and measures regulations

that were presented by the joint task force from ANLA and SAF.

Retailers who fail to comply with Pennsylvania's policy and sell products that do not equal the advertised measure will risk fines and possibly a suspension of operation, which places the onus for compliance on the manufacturers of containers to have their products accurately identified and the growers and retailers who label and advertise the final product.

NAHSA's board of directors, speaking for its distributor membership, expressed concern that the joint task force's recommendation that every retail product be labeled with container volume, content description and a declaration of responsibility (the names of the grower or supplier) could severely impact small to medium growers, who make up approximately 60 percent of the market, according to NAHSA. NAHSA's new Weights and Measures Task Force was created with the following primary objectives:

NAHSA will serve as a disseminator of information on such guidelines through its distributor membership directly to growers and will immediately begin to do so with regards to the actual volume disclosures of horticultural containers.

NAHSA did endorse the ANLA task force's recommendation with regards to how container sizes will be determined and the disclosure requirements for manufacturers of such products, but it did not endorse the labeling and signage recommendations at the retail end of the channel, according to NAHSA. The goal of the NAHSA Task Force is to help the joint task force establish a fair and consistent set of guidelines and to use the distributor membership with their customer contacts to get the proper information to the growers and retailers. For more information, contact NAHSA at (215) 564-3484.

Frank's Nursery Announces New CEO

Frank's Nursery & Crafts, Inc. announced last week that Walter Spokowski became the new president and CEO of the company effective July 12, 2004.

Spokowski came from

Woodworkers Warehouse, Inc., where he had been president and CEO since October 2001. He originally joined Woodworkers' predecessor, Trend-lines, Inc., in March 1997 as executive vice president, merchandising. Prior to joining

Trend-lines, Spokowski spent 12 years in merchandising at Home Depot, including six years in the lawn, garden and nursery businesses, and he has over 25 years of experience in the retail industry, according to Frank's.

"We are very fortunate and pleased to have an executive of the caliber of Mr. Spokowski join us, particularly as he has significant experience in the retail industry. Our company has faced a number of struggles over the

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past few years, but with the help of Abacus Advisors, we have been successful in conducting a bottom-to-top review of our operations," said Gerald Hellerman, a member of the Frank's Board of Directors. "We are excited to have someone with Walt's experience become our CEO and capitalize on the opportunities we have identified with Abacus' assistance. Although Abacus will no longer be providing interim management services for Frank's, it will continue to provide consulting services to the Board of Frank's.

"I am excited to be joining Frank's at this dynamic time in its history," said Spokowski. "I look forward to working with the revitalized Frank's organization."

NAHSA/SGC Partnership

The North American Horticultural Supply Association (NAHSA) announced its dates and location for the 2005 Annual Meeting as well as a new partnership with the Southeast Greenhouse Conference during NAHSA's recent Annual Meeting in Cancun, Mexico. In 2005, NAHSA will offer the first co-joined NAHSA 18th Annual Meeting and 2005 Southeast Greenhouse Conference in Greenville, S.C., during the week of June 19-25. Held within one or two weeks of one another for years, the Southeast Greenhouse Conference and NAHSA decided to adjoin the two events to help bring distributors and manufacturers of horticultural products and the growers and

nurseries even closer together, while offering a significant opportunity for participants in both events to save on travel expenses. NAHSA's 18th Annual Meeting will be held June 19-22 then lead into the Southeast Greenhouse Conference June 22-25.

Specifics of the partnership have not yet been determined; both organizations have a number of benefits they can offer the industry. "The possibilities are limitless to the benefits that can come from this partnership. Besides the obvious cost-saving benefit to our members who participate in both events, this relationship will also help bring the suppliers of horticultural products closer to their customers where they can learn from one another," said NAHSA executive director Talbot Gee.

The two organizations will be working together throughout the summer to develop next year's programs.

Clarification

In our Pack Trial coverage (June 2004) we covered the Kong coleus series (bred by Sakata and marketed by PanAmerican Seed), part of which is a Ball Seed exclusive. We think this is a great new coleus series and are sorry to have implied that it is not suitable for mixed containers. Kong is a low-vigor plant and would need to be paired with other low vigor-plants or positioned near the side of the container to prevent it being overgrown by more vigorous plants, but under these circumstances, it would make a great addition to mixed containers. GPN