

NEWS on the GROW

P. Allen Smith's Garden Home Collection Expands

Armstrong Garden Centers, Bachman's Floral Gift and Garden Centers and Welby Gardens have joined The Flower Fields in offering P. Allen Smith's Garden Home Collection, bringing the total number of independent garden centers to more than 200. The new partners expand the brand's retailer base to California, Colorado, Minnesota and New Mexico.

The Flower Fields has taken over management of the program in order to expand beyond the regions Novalis could not cover. According to Donna Greenbush, media contact for the Flower Fields, "Novalis is now one of our grower retailers, just as Armstrong, Bachman's and Welby are. Now, we are able to take this nationwide by offering it to other retailer groups.

Armstrong will offer the collection in all of its stores and plans to expand the program to additional retailers in California, Arizona and Nevada. Bachman's is offering the collection in the company's six stores in Minneapolis, Minn. Welby has picked up the program in more than 10 garden centers in Colorado and New Mexico. Each company grows, merchandises and delivers collection materials to its retailers, assuring premium quality for both plants and displays.

Novalis had charged a royalty rate for the use of benching for several years. Now, new retailers purchase and keep the benching. They have three options under The Flower Fields management: They can choose a full bench, which holds 1,008 plants; a half bench, which hold 600 plants; or an end cap if they have nice benching. "We're not charging any sort of markup on the benches," said Greenbush. "We want to improve the benching, based on what growers have available to them, so that we can maintain the quality look."

The collection, offered exclusively to independent garden centers, is named for its designer,



gardening authority and media personality, P. Allen Smith. Smith personally selects every plant, designated for sun and shade tolerance. The plants are displayed along with recipe cards with Allen's personal advice for creating containers, beds and borders.

"We have over 1,500 different varieties, so people can choose what works best for their region. P. Allen Smith has picked a color palette and made sure that with that color palette, there are all three different habits," said Greenbush. "On the recipe card, we list what's in the collection for tall and spiky, round and full, and cascading, so you can mix and match. All the colors are pre-coordinated, so people can't go wrong."

Significant enhancements to the program for 2004 under The Flower Fields new management include:

- Elimination of program fees.
- Retailer ownership of custom-made benching for the collection, which includes housing for dynamic large-scale graphics.
- Enhanced POP kit, including header panels that slip into benching, recipe cards for containers and borders, a recipe card holder, ad slicks and a program binder.
- Optional supplementary marketing materials available from Sunrise Marketing.
- Options for personal appearances by P. Allen Smith.

Jim Barrett to Receive Award

Jim Barrett of the University of Florida and GPN's consulting editor has been selected for this year's Southeast Greenhouse Conference (SGC) Horticulture Initiative Award. The award is presented annually to an individual recognized for his or her contribution to the floriculture industry. The award will be presented at the opening of the conference in Greenville, S.C., June 23-26, 2004.

The board of directors of SGC acknowledges Barrett's pioneering work in the field of plant growth regulators, which has revolutionized commercial production of ornamental crops.

"Certainly an award like this is something I really appreciate," said Barrett. "The evolution of the Southeast Greenhouse Conference and the states associated with it has been really remarkable. I've enjoyed being involved with the group and seeing how the conference has improved over the years to become one of the major shows in the U.S."

Barrett's early work with chemicals and extensive educational consulting dealing with plant-hormone regulators introduced new chemicals and application strategies to the industry and aided in the adoption of the labor-saving tools in production. "Jim's work is the foundation on which all the later growth regulator work has been done," said Rick Schoellhorn, floriculture extension specialist from the University of Florida.

Barrett conducts extensive research on poinsettias, including production methodology for new cultivars, growth-regulator effects and flowering responses. "Developing a team-based approach to solving national problems is a really strong aspect of Jim's work," said Schoellhorn.

Barrett has been involved with the SGC since its inception as a conference speaker, and he arranged for Florida to become a part of the Southeast Greenhouse Conference about eight years ago. "I saw the real benefit of getting the Florida growers to participate in [SGC]. Now it's grown and has become very successful."

"The mission of the Southeast



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APHIS Funding Announced for SOD

Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman announced the transfer of \$15.5 million from the USDA Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) to APHIS to help halt the spread of *Phytophthora ramorum*, or Sudden Oak Death (SOD), to non-infested areas of the United States.

More than 100 nurseries in 13 states received infected plants from one nursery in southern California. APHIS will launch a national survey to determine if SOD is causing disease symptoms on hosts and associated hosts in other parts of the United States.

APHIS officials will use the funding for nursery inspection, sampling and testing, and education and outreach for SOD. Funding will also help enforce APHIS' current federal order to prevent the further spread of the disease to other nurseries in the United States.

To help address the ongoing issue in California, APHIS will provide \$6.9 million of this funding to the state for quarantine efforts and identification of infected nurseries. The remaining \$8.6 million will be used for surveys, other quarantine and regulatory enforcement, public outreach and laboratory diagnostics and testing.

"USDA must implement a response plan that includes a comprehensive national survey of *Phytophthora ramorum* in the United States," said Craig Regelbrugge, senior director of government relations for ANLA. "We expect further funding will be needed for prevention, compensation and research." ♦

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Greenhouse Conference and Trade Show is to deliver a high-quality educational program and trade show focused on the latest methods and management techniques in retail and wholesale production and sales of floriculture products and services,"

according to the SGC. The conference is planned and managed by southeastern growers, retailers, sales professionals and educators who provide education and networking to improve the floriculture industry.

The following is a list of high-

lights at the conference:

Wednesday, June 23

7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Field Trip: Tour of southeast trial and display gardens.

Thursday, June 24

8:00 a.m.-noon, Workshop of Focus: The Family Business Forum.

4:15 p.m. Rick Schoellhorn will be presenting Jim Barrett with the Horticulture Initiative Award. P. Allen Smith will be a keynote speaker, addressing "Making the Most of Make-Over Mania."

Friday, June 25. Sessions of Focus.

8:00-10:30 a.m. "Spanish for Pest Management Employees."

7:30-9:30 p.m. "Poinsettias—What Cultivars are Hot and How to Grow Them."

Saturday, June 26. Show Room at the Garden Center Showcase.

For more information on the Southeast Greenhouse Conference, visit www.sgcts.org.



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Pike Family Nurseries Acquired

Roark Capital Group, an Atlanta-based private equity firm, has acquired a majority interest in Pike Family Nurseries, the largest independent lawn and garden center company in the Southeast and the third largest in the United States.

The Pike family will continue to run the 46-year-old company, founded by William "Pete" Pike. William is handing over chief executive duties to his son Randy, who will be the new president and CEO of the company. Roark is providing Pike Family Nurseries with a board of experienced retail executives, and a new chairman will be elected to Pike's board, which is currently being formed.

According to Neal Aronson, Roark founder and managing partner, Roark will provide Pike with the resources it needs to expand the store base. Randy says, "For several years, we've been looking for a good partner to expand outside of the city of Atlanta. Roark's history has been very successful. The information and knowledge that they have given us is a wonderful opportunity to expand."

"Pike Family Nurseries stands for the highest quality products and the best customer service," said Aronson. "Our objective is to take all those core elements, provide Randy Pike with resources and take advantage of some terrific growth opportunities."

"The Pike family are wonderful, first-class people, and we're

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really excited to partner with them," said Aronson. "We're glad that the family is staying involved in the business. It's good for the company, it's good for the employees and it's good for the customers."

Pike currently has 26 stores around metro Atlanta. Although definitive growth plans haven't been made, Randy says, "The long-term goal is to build locations not only through the state of Georgia, but through the Southeast."

According to a recent article from *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, Pike has had intense competition from garden centers at Wal-Mart, Home Depot and Lowe's. However, the business has been able to remain steady, with about \$100 million in annual sales.

"One of the ways to succeed is to get the product out to the people who want it," says Aronson. "If someone moves to a town where there is no Pike's, they might seek a Lowe's or a Home Depot. If we add stores, and people have a choice to go to the Pike Family Nursery, we think they will because they have an incredibly loyal customer base that really appreciates the service level and the quality of the product."

USDA Amending Program

The USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is amending its regulations to establish a long-awaited certification program for imported plants. The newly established program requires registration and certification of any sites that produce plant species in countries where *Ralstonia solanacearum* race 3 biovar 2 is known to occur. This is the program breeders, associations and government have been developing since the first occurrence of *R. solanacearum* and which is only now becoming formalized and announced.

The new program also requires regular testing for *Ralstonia solanacearum* race 3 biovar 2 at production sites as well as use of phytosanitary certification for all imported material from those sites. These new requirements will ensure that imported geraniums and other garden plant species are free of the pathogen.

According to SAF and ANLA,

who have been working together with APHIS to develop the new certification program, "The industry is very supportive of the continued effort to develop a clean-stock certification program for imported geranium cuttings...We believe that, once implemented, this effort

can serve as a model for other, similar programs."

Ralstonia solanacearum race 3 biovar 2 was detected and confirmed in February 2003, in U.S. greenhouses that received imported geranium plants from Kenya. In December 2003, the pathogen was

also detected in a greenhouse in New York on two varieties of geraniums — 'Americana Coral' and 'Americana Bright Red'.

A third variety, 'Americana Cherry Red II', is implicated because it was produced in the same Guatemalan greenhouse



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where the two varieties were found positive. According to APHIS, these three varieties are the basic unit of control. They are defined in the action plan and targeted for destruction.

The May 23, 2003 interim rule called for the declaration of phy-

tosanitary certificates to accompany all geraniums imported into the United States. According to APHIS, the new interim rule adds a certification program that must be implemented at production sites in countries where *Ralstonia* is known to occur that produce

geranium cuttings to be offered for importation into the United States.

The rules and regulations of the new interim rule, effective May 24, 2004, specify that APHIS and host country government officials visit production sites annually after initial approval to verify

compliance. Also, all equipment and materials that come in contact with articles within the production site must be adequately sanitized so that the pathogen "cannot be transmitted between plants or enter from outside the production site via the equipment."

The rule also adds the requirement of a trust fund that will pay APHIS' costs in overseeing inspections. According to the regulations, "The government of the country in which the articles are produced must enter into a trust fund agreement with APHIS before each growing season." The government of the country is required to pay, in advance, all estimated costs that APHIS expects to incur, including salaries, travel expenses and other incidental expenses incurred by inspectors.

The new action plans, which are guidelines for inspectors, eliminate the 2003 action plans, which called for the destruction of all plants within a 1-meter radius of infected shipment. According to APHIS, there is little or no risk of the pathogen being transmitted through leaf contact or splashing of water from leaf to leaf.

The plan also eliminates the time/temperature model for holding plants. The old model was an attempt to predict infection when infected plants expressed wilt symptoms. Recent USDA research indicates that "some plants continue to have latent infections, not showing wilt, even when high temperatures are maintained for long periods of time." Therefore, the old model cannot be used to accurately identify infected plants.

SAF and ANLA's joint comments said, "The Q-37 regulations have a valid, biological purpose: to protect against the infestation of alien pests and diseases...We support the APHIS review of the Quarantine-37 regulations and urge that the current effort to establish a clean-stock certification program for imported geranium cuttings continue."

Riverview Flower Farm Expands

Riverview Flower Farm, Home Depot's largest supplier of 1-gal. premium annuals and perennials

in Florida, has decided to expand in an effort to fulfill Home Depot's need for product. It has purchased Florida Azalea Specialists' 43 acres, located in the farming community of Ruskin, Fla., just 10 miles south of its current 65 acres in Riverview, Fla.

The 22-year-old company has been working with Home Depot for the past 10 years. "We offer Home Depot a higher quality, properly marketed product with good brand recognition," said Rick Brown, who co-owns Riverview with his brother Dave. "It was necessary for us to expand in order to solidify our relationship with Home Depot, who really counts on us for a good percentage of their color business in Florida."

About 13 months ago, Riverview started servicing the lower east coast of Florida's Home Depot's stores. "We doubled our business in taking on that expansion. We could see then that we were going to need more space with the success we had this winter and spring season," says Brown. "We started expanding two years ago to take on the business we got 13 months ago. And in the past four months we decided to expand again. We needed to do a major expansion, and we couldn't do it where we were."

Riverview supplies 106 Home Depot stores in the peninsular Florida zone with 1-gal. annuals, perennials and premium vegetative items. Each Home Depot store gets 3-4 shipments per week year-round. "The other supplier for Home Depot in the same market is Hines Color, located in Homestead, Fla. They supply 4½-inch and commodity products such as garden mums, poinsettias and geraniums," said Brown.

If all goes as planned, Brown says the company will close on July 1, 2004, and renovation will begin. Brown foresees 20 of the 43 new acres being ready for production by this winter season. "We will develop the other acres over the coming years, but that should be enough capacity for the next year." He is planning to begin filling in October and have the 20 acres completely filled by January. "This facility already had eight acres of greenhouses and eight acres of shade houses ready to go. The existing frames will give us a start."

However, the company will still have to put in a transportation system, heating system, lighting equipment, drip irrigation, load racks, side curtains, gutters and new covers for the greenhouses.

Brown says, "There's going to be 12-15 more Home Depot stores in

our district by the end of the year. The stores are building their garden centers much bigger now. That's a key reason we decided to expand — so that we could cover the new store openings."

Riverview markets the "Florida Friendly Plant" line. "We try to grow

things that are going to survive in Florida's harsh climate and provide them at the season when they're best to be planted," said Brown. "We don't want a dissatisfied customer to go back to Home Depot. We proudly put our name on each plant and tell customers how to make it perform with lots of information on the tag, the pot and our Web site." GPN

calendar

June

13-16: North American Horticultural Supply Association Annual Meeting
Cancun, Mexico
(215) 546-3484
www.nahsa.org

17-19: Super Floral Show
Charlotte, N.C.
(312) 332-4650
www.superfloralshow.com

23-26: Southeast Greenhouse Conference
Greenville, S.C.
(877) 927-2775
www.sgcts.org

26-29: Seeley Conference
Ithaca, N.Y.
(607) 255-2166
www.hort.cornell.edu/seeleyconference

July

5-10: 2004 Perennial Plant Symposium and Trade Show
New York, N.Y.
(614) 771-8431
www.perennialplant.org

10-14: OFA Short Course and Trade Show
Columbus, Ohio
(614) 487-1117
www.ofa.org

13-18: ANLA 2004 Convention & Learning Retreat
The Big Island, Hawaii
(202) 789-2900
www.anla.org

21-24: 7th Annual Meeting and Hydro-Mart Exhibition
Chicago, Ill.
(703) 392-5890
www.hydromerchants.org

August

12-14: SNA: World's Showcase of Horticulture
Atlanta, Ga.
(770) 953-3311
www.sna.org

20-22: Nursery/Landscape Expo
Houston, Texas
(800) 880-0343
www.txnla.org

26-28: FarWest Show & Seminars Sponsored by GPN, Lawn & Garen Retailer and Solexx
Portland, Ore.
(800) 342-6401
www.farwestshow.com

September

13-16: Agriflor Brazil 2004
Fortaleza, Ceara, Brazil
+31-20-6622482
www.agriflor.com

22-23: Western Expo
Las Vegas, Nev.
(800) 748-6214
www.westernexpo.com

26-29: International Plant Propagators Society, Eastern Region Annual Meeting
Milwaukee, Wis.
www.ipps.org/easternna/index.htm

29-Oct. 2: SAF Maui 2004
Maui, Hawaii
(800) 336-4743
www.safnow.org

30-Oct. 2: FNATS
Orlando, Fla.
(800) 375-FNGA
www.fnga.org

October

6-8: Agriflor de las Americas 2004
Quito, Ecuador
+31-20-6622482
www.agriflor.com

13-14: Midwest Fall Growers Conference
Council Bluffs, Iowa
(515) 282-8192
sdietz@assoc-mgmt.com

18-20: New England Greenhouse Conference
Worcester, Mass.
(802) 655-7769
www.uvm.edu/~pass/greenhouse/negc.html

November

2-3: Michigan Greenhouse Growers Expo
Lansing, Mich.
(800) 878-5131
www.msu.edu