

National Boost Your Hometown Month

People love the feeling of connectedness; you can help them re-connect to your hometown by promoting plants and garden accents with the objective of showing collective pride in your community.

By Brandi D. McNally

For the entire month of April, you have the opportunity to encourage community beautification as well as the long-term purchasing of plant materials from your garden center. How? April is National Boost Your Hometown Month, the perfect time to promote your plants, landscaping materials, garden accents and any other products your customers can use to turn their yards into a show of pride for your community.

Try creating banners for display throughout your store advertising the promotion, and arranging vignettes of plant and flower combinations with fountains, statuary and other garden accents to encourage customers to visualize your products as part of their desired landscape. Visit your local public library to research your town or city's history, and provide handouts or create a timeline with photos telling the tale of your community's evolution. Find out which plants are indigenous to your region, and educate your customers on the benefits of creating native plant gardens (see page 14 for more information on promoting native plants).

These are just a few of the many idea possibilities for this promotion; your staff can probably come up with many more unique suggestions. Organize a meeting to brainstorm and get your employees excited about the event — after all, as members of your community, your staff will likely find personal significance in this particular promotion as well. Following are some products that could potentially be used as part of your National Boost Your Hometown Month promotion. 

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Promoting America in Bloom

What better way to encourage involvement than competition? You've probably heard of the America in Bloom (AIB) initiative by now, but if you haven't, it's a national beautification program fostering civic pride in communities across the country that recognizes and rewards participating communities for their efforts. AIB was modeled after Canada's Communities in Bloom program, which was launched in 1995 with 29 participating communities and has grown to more than 500 in 2002. The program's objective is threefold: to improve the visual appeal of America's neighborhoods, parks, open spaces and streets through the imaginative use of flowers, plants and trees; to encourage involvement and coordinated action by citizens of all ages, municipal governments, local organizations and businesses; and to emphasize environmental awareness and preservation of heritage and culture as key parts of the program. An awards ceremony and symposium is held annually to provide an information exchange venue and educational speakers and to reward all participating communities.

All American municipalities, counties and universities are invited to register in the following population categories: 10,000 or less; 10,001-25,000; 25,001-50,000; 50,001-100,000; 100,001-300,000; 300,001-500,000; and over 500,001. The National Boost Your Hometown Month promotion provides the perfect platform to educate your customers about AIB — including what it is, why it exists and the responsibilities

the community would have to undertake to participate — and ask interested community members to sign up to become part of an organizing committee that you could form. You would also need to seek out interested city staff and members of local businesses and organizations to participate in your AIB committee.

AIB provides the following resources to help you encourage customer involvement: a downloadable AIB logo for presentations; a 9-minute introductory video; and a 24- x 36-inch information poster. To receive these resources and access the downloadable materials, go to www.americainbloom.org and sign-up online, then E-mail them directly with your request (this information is available in the "How to Participate" section of the AIB Web site). 

Water features

All products in this collection of lightweight, molded polyethylene fountains feature a pump and simple assembly. The entire series includes the oakwood range of barrels, the inspirational group of classical features and a natural collection of stone-effect formations. Go Plastics. (770) 345-0535. **Write in 1459**



Arctotis

This Arctotis has a compact habit, silver leaves and extra-profuse blooms, flowering from April-November. 'Sun Spot's' yellow-orange flowers maintain their color and performance from spring-fall. EuroAmerican Propagators. (888) 323-0730. **Write in 1460**



Statue

These swans were created one at a time by the "lost wax" method, which dates back to ancient Egypt and gives each sculpture its incredible detail — down to the smallest feather or hair. After casting, each sculpture is polished and patinized to give it its verdigris or bronze luster. Brass Baron. (800) 536-0987. **Write in 1461** 

