

HEADLINES

Compiled by Catherine Evans

FROM OFA
TO YOU

America in Bloom (AIB) — the name brings to mind flowers, parks, the great outdoors, our country. It's simple — "Planting pride in our communities" is the main goal.

AIB is organized by the floriculture industry through OFA. The program encourages volunteerism and involves municipal governments, businesses, organizations and citizens in improving their community's quality of life. OFA is pleased to partner with the AIB organization to provide this intense, but friendly, community contest.

AIB is a program for any community of any size in any area. The organization is dedicated to promoting nationwide beautification programs and both personal and community involvement through the use of flowers, plants, trees and other environmental and lifestyle enhancements, and to providing educational programs and resources.

The AIB program brings all community efforts that improve the quality of life under an umbrella that creates a sense of unity. The contest is a forum of expression and a rallying point. All participants win by working together to beautify and improve their communities.

This year, 43 cities are participating in the AIB beautification contest. Throughout the summer, professionally trained teams of judges travel the country evaluating each community in eight criteria: community involvement, heritage preservation, environmental awareness, tidiness, floral displays, turf and groundcover areas, landscaped areas and urban forestry.

Awards will be presented at AIB's annual symposium and awards ceremony September 18-20 in Chicago, Ill., which won AIB's largest population category last year.

Many of last year's cities have returned, but some are taking the year off to work on their programs. They will be implementing recommendations from the AIB judges and networking with other cities for ideas. Last year's winners graduated to various international challenges.

The 2002 winners in each of six population categories were Chicago, Ill.; Kalamazoo County, Mich.; Fayetteville, Ark.; Westlake, Ohio; Fairhope, Ala.; and Camp Hill, Pa.

AIB debuted in 2001 as part of Canada's successful Communities in Bloom (CIB) program. At that time, four U.S. cities partnered with four Canadian cities. CIB is modeled after similar programs in France, England and Ireland. In 2002, nearly 40 cities with populations ranging from 2,000-3 million participated in AIB.

As the administrator of the AIB contest, OFA is excited to be involved with these communities as they beautify their cities while encouraging community involvement, patriotism and civic pride. For more information on how you can support America in Bloom contact AIB at (614) 487-1117; E-mail: aib@ofa.org; or www.americainbloom.org.

HARDWARE SHOW: IMPROVEMENTS GALORE

By now, many of you are already familiar with the split between Hardware Show owner Reed Exhibitions and industry sponsor American Hardware Manufacturer's Association (AHMA), with each group planning its own show for 2004. What you might not know is that for those of us planning to stay with the industry, i.e., AHMA, the 2004 AHMA Hardware Show, to remain in Chicago, will be loaded with benefits for L&G professionals.



For starters, the timing, April 18-20, will give us an opportunity to shop the show in time for early-order spring deadlines. Also, the exhibitor costs have been significantly reduced, making the show attractive to a much larger exhibitor pool. Finally, and most importantly, AHMA has made a commitment to the lawn and garden industry, and specifically independent garden centers with the creation of World of Lawn, Garden & Outdoor Living. This is more than just the name of the exhibition hall; it's a concept that will link all the new hardline products with a green goods exhibition and quality education.

This is a completely new concept for the Hardware Show and for L&G trade shows in general, and we at *Lawn & Garden Retailer* feel so positively about it that we have given our endorsement to the AHMA and the show. What this means for you is that we will be coordinating educational sessions that feature *Lawn & Garden Retailer* authors such as Judy Sharpton and myself discussing the same kinds of profit-driven ideas you see every month in *Lawn & Garden Retailer*. Additionally, the AHMA Hardware Show will feature a new green goods pavilion to showcase some of the best new plant genetics on the market in an end-use situation and a Garden Center of the Future where you can shop a functioning garden center, complete with cash wrap and POS, to get ideas about traffic flow, merchandising, new products and support systems.

Sounds like a lot of lawn and garden related information, doesn't it? Well it will be. This is a new show with a new attitude and a new focus, and we couldn't recommend more strongly that you not miss it.

If you're looking for more information about educational sessions, registration or exhibition space, call (800) 723-9895 or check out www.ahmahardwareshow.com. See you in April!

—Bridget White

Scotts Introduces New Independent Nursery Program

The Scotts Company chose the 2003 Garden Centers of America Tour in Colorado, to announce the introduction of Nursery Select from Miracle-Gro, a new line of plant care products. The new program, which will be available through independent nurseries only, is designed by Scotts to help nursery and garden center owners increase sales, profits and customer loyalty through an integrated approach. The specially formulated line of consumer products will be available for order in fall 2003 for the 2004 growing season.



According to Scotts, nurseries will have the opportunity to increase sales and profits considerably by simply appealing to a segment of customers who are already in their stores, but who may not normally purchase their plant care products there. During the introduction of the Nursery Select program, John Connel, vice president, Independent Retailers Business Unit at Scotts, mentioned the following reasons as to why Scotts predicts this new program will work:

- The primary nursery customers are women who want beautiful home environments, of which plants play a key role.
- These women are not experts; they need help to make the most of their live nursery purchases but are intimidated based on lack of knowledge.
- Nurseries are in the best position to eliminate this barrier for the customer in a way that other retailers are not focused on delivering.

Based on studies Scotts has completed for this new line, a solid array of merchandising and training tools for independent nurseries and garden centers will be offered. For more information, visit www.scotts.com.

LAWN & GARDEN RETAILER HEADLINES

GCA TOUR: THREE DAYS AND 14 GARDEN CENTERS

The 12th Annual Garden Centers of America (GCA) Retail Specialty Tour was held June 18-21 in the Denver, Colo. area. With 128 attendees touring 14 garden centers and two public gardens, the three-day event gave attendees a number of new ideas, a chance to observe other successful garden centers, a networking opportunity and, for this editor, the repeated question, "How many rolls of film are you on now?"

All of the 14 garden centers on the tour range from \$1.8-10 million in sales and 1-5 acres in size. Another commonality of the locations was the way they all work together on a number of public relations projects (i.e., drought-hardy plants) through advertising, buying opportunities and vendor communications. The Denver-area garden centers believe that other garden centers are not the competition, so they all work together to find ways to bring customers to them instead of the big box stores.

The event began on June 18 with a kick-off reception from Monrovia where the new Premium Plant campaign was announced (See page 54 for details). There was also a presentation on the recent drought problem in Colorado and how garden centers were able to have successful sales while preserving the water supply. Welby Gardens has come up with the Hardy Boy X-Rated Plants promotion that really hit the target with Colorado garden centers. Almost every store on the tour had the X-Rated program and said it was a winner especially because of the Colorado drought, and people still wanted gardens despite the water restrictions.

Then the official tour began, and the next three days the tour included visits to City Floral, Groundcovers Greenhouse, Country Fair, Tagawa Garden Centers,

Nick's Garden Center, Arapahoe Acres, Lafayette Florist, McGuckin's Hardware, Fort Collins Nursery, Gulley Greenhouses, The Flower Bin, Paulino Gardens, Wildflower Farm and Echter's. All of these garden centers were unique in their own ways and caused my mouth to drop at every location. Every store had promotional programs, displays, marketing strategies, etc. that were amazing to see and learn from.



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RETAIL SALES SOAR TO HIGH NUMBERS

It seems that with the war with Iraq winding down, retailers are finally seeing sales rise. According to the most recent NRF-BTM Executive Opinion Survey, a monthly index by the National Retail Federation (NRF) and the Bank of Tokyo Mitsubishi Ltd. (BTM), the Retail Sector Performance Index (measures retail executives, evaluations of monthly sales, customer traffic, the average transaction per customer, employment, inventories and a six-month-ahead sales outlook expectation) for June rose to normal levels for the first time since the survey began in September 2002.

According to the survey, retailers are very excited about the increase for the short term future. According to the NRF, the June Demand Outlook Index (a six-month outlook for sales) jumped to 59.4 percent from 47.1 percent in May.

In other NRF news, with the economy working its way back up, retailers are working hard, adjusting their strategies and looking for new ideas on how to bring those customers back into their stores and stay on top of the competition. According to the 2003 Triversity Top 100 Retailers ranking, from *STORES* magazine, the publication of the NRF, this new retail homework program is working to bring the customers into the store.

Wal-Mart is the top of the list as the largest retailer in the United States with 2002 sales being \$246.5 billion, a 12.2-percent increase over 2001. Home Depot comes in next as the second-largest retailer in the United States with 2002 sales of \$58.2 billion, which is an 8.8-percent increase over 2001.

AHMA Hardware Show 2004

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<p>AUGUST</p> <p>9-14: New York International Gift Fair New York, N.Y. T: (914) 421-3200 www.glmshows.com</p> <p>10-12: National Hardware Show Chicago, Ill. www.reedexpo.com</p> <p>15-17: Nursery/Landscape Expo Dallas, Texas T: (800) 880-0343 www.txnla.org</p> <p>20-23: Calscape Expo Irvine, Calif. T: (707) 462-2276 www.cipaweb.org</p> <p>20-24: ANLA Landscape Operations Tour Southern Ohio T: (202) 789-2900 www.anla.org</p> <p>21-23: Farwest Show Portland, Ore. Sponsored by <i>Lawn & Garden Retailer, GPN</i> and Proven Winners T: (503) 653-8733 www.farwestshow.com</p> <p>31-2: SPOGA International Trade Fair for Sporting Goods, Camping Equipment and Garden Furniture Cologne, Germany www.spoga-cologne.de</p> <p>SEPTEMBER</p> <p>7-9: Vancouver Gift Show Vancouver, BC, Canada T: (914) 421-3200 www.glmshows.com</p> <p>7-10: Autumn Fair Birmingham Birmingham, England www.autumnfair.com</p> <p>11-13: ANLA Landscape Distribution Tour New York, N.Y. T: (202) 789-2900 www.anla.org</p> <p>13-16: Atlanta Fall Gift and Accessories Market</p>	<p>Atlanta, Ga. www.americasmart.com</p> <p>21-23: GLEE International Garden and Leisure Exhibition Birmingham, England www.gleebirmingham.com</p> <p>24-27: SAF Annual Convention Boca Raton, Fla. T: (703) 836-8700 www.safnow.org</p> <p>28-30: Fall Gift and Home Furnishings Market Los Angeles, Calif. T: (213) 763-5800 www.lamart.com</p> <p>OCTOBER</p> <p>1-5: ANLA Retail Roadshow Northern California T: (202) 789-2900 www.anla.org</p> <p>18-20: International Lawn and Garden Power Equipment Exposition Louisville, Ky. T: (502) 562-1969 www.expo.mow.org</p> <p>22-23: Western Expo Las Vegas, Nev. T: (800) 748-6214 www.westernexpo.com</p> <p>NOVEMBER</p> <p>6-7: Gift and Furniture Sample Sale Los Angeles, Calif. T: (213) 763-5800 www.lamart.com</p> <p>7-9: New York Gift Cash and Carry Show New York, N.Y. T: (914) 421-3200 www.glmshows.com</p> <p>12-13: Power Expo 2003 Harrisburg, Pa. T: (610) 544-5775</p> <p>SAVE THE DATE: APRIL 18-20, 2004 AHMA Hardware Show Chicago, Ill. T: (800) 723-9895 www.ahmahardwareshow.com</p>
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During the lunch hour for the first two days, there was a seminar each day about new products and ideas on the market for the 2004 spring season. At Tagawa, PanAmerican Seed held a seminar about its new varieties coming onto the market in 2004, giving the tour members a chance to see where the plants were bred instead of just seeing them come from the grower.

Next came a seminar from Novalis, Inc. about its new marketing programs including Plants that Work (winner of sister magazine *GPN's* Marketing Innovation Award, June 2003 issue), Twice as Nice Daylily Collection, The National Parks Rose Collection and P. Allen Smith's Garden Home Collection. All of these collections include display material, POP information, plants, etc. Many people thought this was a new and exciting idea that was talked about very positively throughout the rest of the tour.

During the first tour night dinner, Scotts made a big announcement that they are planning on introducing a new line called Nursery Select from Miracle-Gro exclusively for independent nurseries (see page 52 for more details). That kept tour members talking for the rest of the trip.

At Welby Gardens, after a huge roasted pig feast, attendees chose three of nine seminars to attend from American Takii, Benary, Proven Winners, Selecta First Class, The Flower Fields, PanAmerican Seeds, Bodger Botanicals (all plant breeders), MasterTag and Plantfind.com. The companies introduced their new products for the 2004 season.

There were also 10 seminars the next night at Echter's from CCIRTRIAD, Henri Studio, Monrovia, Nexus Greenhouse Systems, Scotts, Hines Horticulture, SoilSoup, Nick's Garden Center, Home & Garden Showplace and Echter's. All of the seminars were well taken and very informative.

I would like to thank the GCA for the wonderful tour and learning opportunity that was offered at each location. I also want to thank all of the participating garden centers for the opportunity to see your stores and learn so many new ideas that will definitely help in keeping up with new trends and ways to help others improve their stores across. Lastly thank you to the June Garden Center Tour Committee including Steve Echter and Harriett McMillan, Echter's; Al and John Gerace, Welby Gardens; Mike Porter and Jeff Warschauer, Nexus Greenhouse Systems; Barry Winchell, Evergreen Nursery; Geoff Luchetta; Marijane Thomas, Castle Rock Gift & Garden; and Donna Ralston, Garden Centers of Colorado for being excellent tour guides and putting on a great show.

— Catherine Evans

MONROVIA LAUNCHES NEW CAMPAIGN

Monrovia Growers has launched a "premium plant" campaign in garden centers this season to help educate garden center staff and consumers about what differentiates a Monrovia premium branded plant from commodity products.

Monrovia, which sells almost exclusively to independent garden centers, is giving retailers colorful posters, banners, informational brochures and a seven-minute video that tells the story of how Monrovia propagates plants. The campaign theme is High-Bred, Well-Fed and Loving-Care.

High-bred describes the high quality of varieties chosen; Well-fed talks about the soil mixes used for its plants. Loving-care describes how the plants are nurtured before they leave the nursery. For more information go to www.monrovia.com.

NURSERY SALES DECLINED IN 2002

According to the most recent USDA statistics, U.S. nursery sales declined slightly in 2002. The USDA's Economic Research Service estimated nursery crop sales at \$8.9 billion in 2002, which is less than 2001 where sales reached an all-time high. According to the survey, the average U.S. household spent \$84 on nursery crops. With the war, a weakened economy and the lowering job rates, economists think those are some of the reasons why the sales are lower.

GARDEN WRITERS TREND RESEARCH IS COMPLETE

The Garden Writers Association's (GWA) national Summer Gardening Trends Research survey is complete, and the current results are now available for GWA members. The summer research report complements the inaugural spring 2003 research reported in March. The next seasonal research results for fall will be available in September.

According to the survey, the results indicate that, to most people, having a yard or garden means far more than pulling weeds and mowing the lawn. This summer 81 percent of Americans that have a yard or garden, plan to partake in yard- or garden-related activities. About 55 percent plan on using their yard or garden for relaxation — and 61 percent of Midwesterners will be relaxing there, more than the rest of the country. Midwesterners also have the highest proportion of do-it-yourself gardeners.

More than half expect to grow flowers, plants or shrubs. And, the most common reason given for growing fruits, vegetables and herbs at home cited the satisfaction of growing their own food.

After relaxing and growing, the next most popular use for the yard or garden is entertaining or socializing. People also expect to use their yards and gardens for a children's play area, food production and for health or physical exercise. 🌱



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