

LAWN & GARDEN RETAILER HEADLINES

TOURING THE STATES

Within the last few weeks, I was lucky enough to travel on the ANLA Retail Roadshow in New York and the GCA Summer Tour in Virginia to see a number of fabulous garden centers. These two locations were great choices. Both trips offered visits to a number of garden centers as well as a few extra places, and to make the trips even better, there were some flower fashion extravaganzas added to the mix. Despite some rain, a few bus problems and some early mornings, attendees had a really great time and were able to take back a lot of useful information to try out in their garden centers. Here are a few highlights from the trips. Take note: You don't want to miss out next year.

ANLA

The Statue of Liberty, Broadway and the Empire State Building in the evening — what could be better than that on a nice summer day? Garden centers of course! On June 16 ANLA kicked off its annual Retail Roadshow with a fabulous reception on the rooftop of the Metro Hotel overlooking the Empire State Building.

The next morning came, and the official tour began. We traveled to New York, New Jersey and Connecticut and saw some of the most interesting garden centers in the country. We stayed right in the heart of Manhattan near Macy's, where attendees were able to enjoy the city's extravagance in the evening after tour visits.

On Thursday, June 17 we visited Martin Viette Nurseries; Scarsella's Flowers, Greenhouse and Home; Hicks Nurseries, Inc.; and Atlantic Nursery and Garden Shop. To top off the day, we were all able to visit the Macy's Parade and Special Event Studio, where we saw designs for some of the floats for the upcoming events (the Macy's Flower Show, 4th of July Celebration and the Thanksgiving Day Parade) and some of the special balloons and actual floats being built. It was quite a visit for those of us who are still kids at heart.

The morning came again with a new group of places to visit. On Friday, June 18 we started off at Sam Bridge Nurseries and continued with Stew Leonard's Grocery (an interesting and fun perspective on grocery shopping), Oliver Nurseries, Van Wilgen's Garden Center, Lexington Gardens, and Hollandia Nursery and Garden Center. The day ended with a night on the town for all attendees who wanted to get out and party in the city.

For the final day of the tour we all attended Sickles Market, Williams Nursery, Poundridge Nurseries, Inc., Rosedale Nurseries, Inc. and ended at Matterhorn Nursery Inc., where we had seminars from U.K. architect Gary Wilburn and the highly anticipated opening of the David Austin Rose Garden. The night of dinner and dancing started out with two

charismatic announcers for
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Left: Hollandia Nursery & Garden Center, Bethel, Conn.; right: ANLA and Scotts color model at Matterhorn Nursery, Spring Valley, N.Y.

OAN Seeks Inspection and Surveillance Program

The Oregon Association of Nurseries (OAN) is asking the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) to step up its inspection of Oregon nurseries by developing, implementing and maintaining a state-of-the-art inspection and surveillance program.

OAN is a strong proponent for the production of healthy nursery stock and using state-of-the-art testing and inspection methods. With its history of supporting rigorous and effective quarantines through a cooperative partnership with the ODA and USDA/APHIS, the OAN is requesting that the ODA re-evaluate current survey standards.

"The OAN is asking the ODA to implement a *Phytophthora ramorum* pathogen-free production program in an effort to assure the nursery industry and home gardeners that Oregon continues to grow and ship high-quality, disease-free nursery stock," said Michael McCarter, OAN president. "Because of the potential for market uncertainty and additional regulation, we are asking the ODA to immediately institute an inspection program that, in many cases, exceeds the currently recommended USDA/APHIS standards. We want the regulation to be mandatory and include both the regulated hosts and associated hosts of *P. ramorum*."

OAN would like all nurseries in the state that ship host and associated host material to be inspected and tested at a scientifically valid level using USDA/APHIS-approved methods. The association is also asking that nurseries growing or shipping this material employ USDA/APHIS-approved best management practices (BMPs) to lower the risk of introduction. "We want the ODA to monitor the adoption of BMPs through a mandatory compliance agreement program," stated McCarter. "The association strongly supports effective and transparent regulations to mitigate *P. ramorum*. We are asking the ODA to use its broad regulatory powers to make this come to pass."

OAN and its members want to assure all purchasers of Oregon plant material and regulatory officials that plants produced by Oregon growers are free of *Phytophthora ramorum*.

Kmart Sells Stores to Sears

The Kmart Corporation recently announced that the company has signed a definitive agreement with Sears, Roebuck and Co., to sell up to 54 Kmart stores for \$621 million in cash. The exact number of stores, locations and total purchase amount are yet to be determined but will be looked at based on the satisfaction of certain conditions that are supposed to happen within 60 days for the majority of the stores and 75 days for the remainder. At this time, Kmart will continue to operate the stores that will be sold until March or April 2005. Sears has agreed to consider offering employment to any Kmart employee who is interested in being employed by Sears at the converted stores.

In a June 30, 2004 press release from Kmart, Julian C. Day, Kmart's president and CEO, said, "Today we

announced the second of two transactions involving the sale of stores. The transactions with Sears and Home Depot (which was announced June 4) represent a total purchase price of almost \$1 billion for less than 80 of our stores, or approximately 5 percent of our current store base. Both transactions represent opportunities to realize value, which can be utilized to improve the remaining store base and to strengthen the company. We are not currently in discussions regarding any additional significant store sales, although we will continue to evaluate opportunities as they arise."

Day stated further in the press release, "We are committed to achieving value for our shareholders by operating our stores and recognizing the value of our assets. After both transactions are closed, Kmart will

remain one of the largest retailers in America, with more than 1,420 stores and approximately \$20 billion in revenues. We will be able to direct all our attention on building upon and accelerating the considerable operating improvements that we have already achieved, including the Fall Apparel launch in July and our partnership with The WB Network. We have a strong management team in place and are committed to making Kmart a better company every day."

Kmart also announced that its board of directors has increased its existing share repurchase authorization to \$100 million. Purchases made under this program will depend on the prevailing stock price, market conditions, alternative investment opportunities and other factors the press release stated.

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 four 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., 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 application 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 will begin to discuss 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 June 13-16, 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 manufacturer 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 the small to medium grower, 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 the NAHSA at (215) 564-3484. ▶

AUGUST

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

26-28 Farwest Show and Seminars Sponsored by Lawn & Garden Retailer
 Portland, Ore.
 (800) 342-6401
www.farwestshow.com

SEPTEMBER

5-7: GAFA International Garden Trade Fair
 Cologne, Germany
www.koelnmesse.de

18-22 Casual Furniture Show, Chicago, Ill.
 (312) 527-7581
www.merchandise-mart.com

19-21 GLEE Int'l. Garden and Leisure Exhibition
 Birmingham, England
 (609) 921-0222
www.gleebirmingham.com

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

29-Oct. 2 SAF Annual Convention
 Maui, Hawaii
 (703) 836-8700
www.safnow.org

30-Oct. 2: FNATS
 Orlando, Fla.
 (407) 295-7994
www.fnga.org

OCTOBER

3-8 International Garden Centre Congress/Tour
 New Zealand
 (202) 789-2900
www.anla.org

18-20 New England Greenhouse Conference
 Worcester, Mass.
www.uvm.edu/~pass/greenhouse.negc.html

NOV/DEC

Nov. 17-20: GCA Holiday Tour
 Seattle, Wash.
 (888) 648-6463
www.gardencentersof-america.org

Dec. 2-4: Lawn & Landscape Conference & Trade Show
 Anaheim, Calif.
 (800) 456-0707
www.lawntradeshows.com

JANUARY 2005

9-11: Western Nursery and Landscape Assn. Annual Meeting and Trade Show
 Overland Park, Kan.
www.wnla.org

14-17: Gift Fair in Atlanta
 Atlanta, Ga.
 (678) 285-3976
www.thegiftfairinatlanta.com

20-22: TPIE
 Orlando, Fla.
 (407) 295-7994
www.fnga.org

27-30: IPM, International Horticulture Trade Fair
 Essen, Germany
 (212) 974-8459
www.essentradeshows.com

FEBRUARY

1-3: New England Grows
 Boston, Mass.
 (508) 653-3009
www.negrows.org

3-6: ANLA Management Clinic
 Louisville, Ky.
 (202) 789-2900
www.anla.org

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HEADLINES

the "Color Fashion Show" sponsored by Nursery Select to announce its new color campaign. ANLA president Dale Bachman and first lady Ruth Bachman gracefully MCed the show with a lot of flare and even more laughs. To end the evening, ANLA announced that next year's Retail Roadshow will be held in Minnesota.

GCA

This year's GCA Summer Tour was a whirlwind trip around the Williamsburg-Tidewater, Va., area. The weather was wonderful (cool, not typical for Virginia this time of year), the attendees were great and the tour was even better. This year, the CGA took a little bit of a different approach by adding a number of wholesale growers and several more educational sessions to the trip.

On Sunday, June 27 the trip started off with a bang due to the opening reception at Busch Gardens in Williamsburg. Attendees had a great time, drank some beer (Busch Gardens is owned by Anheuser-Busch Brewing Company) and went on a number of fun theme park rides. This was a good kick off to an interesting tour.

On Monday, June 28 we started with a tour of White's Nursery (grower/retailer), then we went on to McDonald Garden Center in Chesapeake, Va. The tour continued to Lancaster Farms (grower), Bennett's Creek Nursery (grower), Heirloom Botanical Garden Boutique, Smithfield Gardens and ended the evening with a great dinner at Anderson's Home & Garden Showplace.

Tuesday came with excitement when we arrived at the Virginia Growers, Inc. (grower), Stranges Florist and Great Big Greenhouse. The night came to a close with a beautiful tour and dinner at the Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens.

On the final day of the tour, the group was able to take a nice guided tour of Colonial Williamsburg, where we saw people in period costumes and shops. For a scenic lunch, we arrived at the Norfolk Botanical Garden for a tour and a lecture from P. Allen Smith, who joined the tour for the day. The group continued on to Atlantic Garden Center and to the final stop of McDonald Garden Center, Virginia Beach, Va. From there the group toured, listen to seminars, had a nice dinner and ended the night with a fabulous show called "Fashion in Bloom" put on by Ball Horticulture and New England Pottery. The night was great, and the crowd went wild for the show.

Overall, both tours had a great turnout (more than 150 each) and put on a wonderful time for all attendees. Each of the garden centers we visited has its own special thing about it that made it much more exciting to see. Thank you to all of the garden centers who participated; you all have wonderful stores, and it was a treat seeing them. I want to thank both ANLA and CGA for all of the great planning and effort it took to plan these tours, and thank you for giving us such a great time. Also, thank you to all of the tour sponsors for all of the support you have given, without you, these events would not be as interesting and exciting.

—Catherine Evans



Top: The "Fashion In Bloom" show made an impact on attendees and participants alike, as you can see from this passionate embrace. Bottom: Attendees were able to tour McDonald Garden Center, Chesapeake, Va., in addition to watching the show.