

Schlussbericht Cultivate 15

The World Gathers at the AmericanHort Cultivate'15

Columbus, Ohio, USA - Participants from the United States, Canada, Mexico, and more than 20 other countries representing Africa, Asia, Central America, Europe, Middle East, Oceania, and South America gathered in Columbus, Ohio for Cultivate'15 on July 11-14. The largest all-industry horticulture exposition and convention in North America recently concluded with approximately 10,000 attendees. This year, attendees saw more exhibitors, an expanded collection of business-building programs, and the presentation of several industry initiatives.

The event gathered professionals from all aspects of the horticulture industry, including garden and floral retailing, greenhouse and nursery production, plant breeding, landscaping, interior plantscaping, research and education, and the manufacturers and distributors of products and services. Formerly known as the OFA Short Course, it was the 87th edition of the event that was rebranded last year as "Cultivate."

Michael V. Geary, the AmericanHort President and Chief Executive Officer, said the event continues to grow and serve the diverse businesses that comprise the industry. "Cultivate is not just a 'grower show' anymore, and hasn't been in contemporary times. Over the last decade, we increased the programming and exhibitor mix to provide a substantial experience for local garden retailers, landscapers, and the other business sectors." In fact, he continued, "It's not just a trade show. This year more than 120 educational sessions were offered, and they were complemented by hands-on workshops and tours."

"AmericanHort brings together the entire industry so that growers, breeders, retailers, and installers can connect. This year, we also expanded our offering for interior plantscapers so they can build their skills, and explore products and services for their businesses. There is something for all parts of the vertically-integrated industry, and that's why the event is important for so many," said Geary.

The programs and activities this year included a larger "Retail District" to accommodate more companies to exhibit products and services for local garden and floral retailers, and related hands-on workshops. The "Live for Growers" pavilion offered multiple lectures and demonstrations for growers. Three all-day tours were organized on the first day for participants to visit model garden centers, greenhouse facilities, and nursery production sites. Specialized educational tracks and exhibitors were also arranged for florists.

"As the only trade association for local garden retailers and interior plantscapers, we are offering needed support for those businesses and all others that sell plants, trees, flowers, and provide related services," said Geary. "We are committed to ensuring the vitality of our industry, and that's why AmericanHort is also making a substantial investment in these businesses with more educational programming and advocacy."

Premiered at Cultivate'15 was the AmericanHort SHIFT initiative. Along with the Horticultural Research Institute, the two organizations are conducting research and developing strategies to propose how the industry needs to react to a new generation of consumers. A 3,000 square foot exhibition was constructed, and it included insights and strategies that are an introduction to forthcoming programs and resources for the organization's member companies.

The association also brought visibility to its "Grow Wise. Bee Smart." campaign with numerous

presentations on sustaining pollinator health and increasing the use of pollinator-friendly plants. As a founding member of the National Pollinator Garden Network, AmericanHort offers resources for growers and retailers on the subject.

"Each year, Cultivate provides an opportunity to expose our members and the greater industry to important issues impacting our businesses and our customers," said Dale Deppe, the AmericanHort Chairman of the Board, and owner of Spring Meadow Nursery in Michigan. "The horticulture industry is part of almost every important event and milestone in our lives. Cultivate is a celebration and recognition of how we contribute to society every single day."

Attendees were inspired by the keynote speakers, which included Curt Steinhorst of the Center for Generational Kinetics. Steinhorst offered a humorous take on the Millennial generation, yet he provided a serious perspective on how employers and our service strategies must adjust to meet changing consumer demographics. The other keynote speaker was Nancy Fire, a consumer expert and consultant to some of the leading and well-known brands, including HGTV. She reinforced Steinhorst's message and shared trends in color, fashion, and furniture. She reminded attendees that horticulture is setting trends with the beauty and functionality of horticultural products, and that the industry needs to capitalize on this to remain relevant.

Every corner of the Greater Columbus Convention Center was stunningly decorated with horticulture products contributed by AmericanHort members. More than 100 volunteers also donated their time over the course of nine days by assisting with the setup, teardown, and onsite logistics. At the conclusion of the convention, the remaining plants, trees, and hard goods were distributed to nonprofit organizations and educational institutions, including City of Columbus Recreation & Parks, Columbus Parklet Project, Franklin Park Conservatory, Habitat for Humanity, Homeport, and the Ohio State University Chadwick Arboretum & Learning Garden.

Cultivate'16 will be held in Columbus, Ohio on July 9-12, 2016. Registration and housing is expected to be available in March 2016 but reservations for exhibit space are accepted now.