

Botanical Bounty Abounded



AHS provided carts for shoppers to carry their purchases at their annual spring garden market at River Farm.

By GLENDA C. BOOTH
MOUNT VERNON GAZETTE

The sunny, 70-degree day brought out fervent “plantophiles” like Hollin Hall resident Dorothy Keogh. “I come every year to buy Juliet tomatoes and pineapple sage,” she said. “The sage is good for hummingbirds.” Another Mount Vernon resident, Ingrid Reid, always goes to buy native plants.

By Saturday’s close, the American Horticultural Society’s (AHS) two-day, annual, spring garden market at their River Farm headquarters in Mount Vernon had attracted around 2,500 eager shoppers.

Kory Holzle at “Peony’s Envy”

ket. He’s been coming for 20 years “because of the great customers,” he said. “We love to help people get their gardens started.”

Holly Hammond brought vegetables from her Scottsville, Virginia, Whisper Hill Farm. She starts around 200 different organic herbs and vegetables, like peppers, cucumbers and onions, in February.

Eager shoppers perused tables loaded with green like tomatoes, peppers, thyme, dill, nasturtiums, bearded irises, ferns, columbine, flowering quince, arrowwood viburnum, tree saplings and more. Jill Bernier who grew up near River Farm, looked for lettuce and peppers to grow in planters at her townhouse.

It was the first year at the market for Rosa Flores, from Benton, Pennsylvania, who gave visitors honey samples, with enticing names like vanilla bean, peppermint whipped and fermented garlic honey. “You can actually taste the garlic. It’s good for colds,” she boasted.

Randy Wilson, a local and owner of Nature by Design, counseled customers on deer-resistant plants. He’s at the Sunday Four Mile Run Farmers Market and delivers plants to anyone with an Alexandria postal address. A 25-year veteran of the AHS market, Wilson specializes in native plants. Why? “We wouldn’t have any food without native plants,” he said. “I love the wildlife that comes with the plants more than the plants,” as bees buzzed around his plants.

Greg’s Art and Garden Iron tent was crammed with metal and iron art hauled all the way from Covington, Kentucky. Shoppers nabbed

SEE BOTANICAL BOUNTY, PAGE 5
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Forty vendors engaged plant enthusiasts for two days at the American Horticultural Society’s annual two-day spring garden market at River Farm.



Two varieties of aromatic basil lured shoppers.



Christina Foy’s kokedama intrigued many shoppers.



Mount Vernon resident Avery Oerth makes and sells positive affirmation buttons.

cheerfully offered peony therapy, coaching customers, amused by the sign, on how to plant them. His team grows over 700 varieties on their Bernardsville, New Jersey, farm. Why peonies? “Because they are classic, hardy and will outlive all of us,” he said, adding, “They remind me of Grandma.”

Dave O’Neill with Radical Roots Farm in Keezletown, Virginia, starts his herb and vegetable seeds in January to be ready for this mar-



Christina Foy’s “air plants” are Spanish moss hanging from sea urchin shells.



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FROM PAGE 4

butterflies, dragonflies and plant stands that sparkled in the sun.

Christina Foy's Plants and What Knot tent from Chantilly had a steady stream of garden-goers intrigued by her products. A botanical artist and market "newbie," she sold kokedama, Japanese moss balls, living wall art featuring tropical plants and "air plant jellyfish," made of Spanish moss dangling from sea urchin shells. She sculpts the moss balls with soil and sphagnum moss and holds them together with fishing line.

Sam Little founded 580 Pottery in Ashland, Virginia, and peddled his handmade self-watering goblet planters that have a wicking rope and water basin that keep plants like African violets and orchids hydrated.

Mara Bonner from Falls Church retailed botanical silk and cotton scarves which she makes by rolling actual leaves in a dye blanket and steams them for 90 minutes.

A Roaming Stone pair, billed as a Northern Virginia mobile tool sharpening outfit, sharpened knives and garden tools on site. "We'll come to your home," said



Mara Bonner makes scarves with plant designs.

Tim Toma.

Mount Vernon-area resident Avery Oerth sold "positive affirmation buttons" that he makes, with words like "bloom" and "Kindness lives here."

"A traditional job was not a good

fit for him," his mother said.

Ana's Twist sold empanadas and refreshing sorbets. The aromas from the Rocklands Real Barbeque food truck generated a steady line for barbeque, potato salad, baked beans and macaroni and cheese.



Tim Little sells self-watering goblets for plants.



Two gentlemen from Roaming Stone sharpened knives and gardening tools at AHS annual spring garden market at River Farm.

Even the carryout boxes were plant based, made of plant fiber that "turns into soil in 90 days," the lids claim.

This year's market sponsors were Bartlett Tree Experts, Burke and Herbert Bank, the Northern

Virginia Conservation Trust, Wegman's, Hartley Botanic and Party Potty.

The 25-acre River Farm was the northernmost of George Washington's five farms and has been AHS's national headquarters since 1973.

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