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Flowers have a positive impact on our lives

Laura DePrado 9:02 a.m. EDT October 19, 2015



(Photo: Photo courtesy of Laura DePrado)

Flowers have a positive impact on our lives.

A behavioral study conducted at Harvard University shows people feel more compassionate toward others, have less worry and anxiety, and feel less depressed when flowers are present. The history, and evidence-based studies on the benefits of flowers and plants continue to gain notoriety. It makes sense as we would not survive without plants. We wear and grow plants. We use plants to make medicine and many other health supplements. We use in sickness, and in sorrow.

In an article published in New Jersey Agriculture 2015 Magazine, "There is something soothing about working in a garden. The feeling of dirt in your hands and watching a plant flourish bring a sense of serenity and fulfillment." The therapeutic practice of gardening has proven to have significant physical, social and cognitive benefits and has been specialized in the field of horticultural therapy."

I had the extraordinary privilege of spending a day with Industry leaders who support the existence and the abundance of materials used in the growing field of Horticultural Therapy at Kube Pak Open House, Sept. 30 in Allentown.

Kube Pak is a wholesale grower of fine garden plants, custom grown plugs, rooted cuttings and finished annuals and perennials. The open house is a massive, indoor display of thousands of mums, pansies (violas), carnations, (dianthus), as far as the eye could see. It was a cornucopia of the best this fall season has to offer in flowers and flower combinations in every direction vertically and horizontally that drew buyers more than 200 landscapers and retail customers who sell to their clients from Washington, D.C. to Pittsburgh, and up to Boston.

"They represented garden centers, landscapers, mom and pop operations, large landscape operations, like Brickman," said John Swanekamp, Kube Pak family-owner. In addition, a group from Trenton Psychiatric Hospital was here for field trip. "Our first Open House was outside, with maybe 100 pots of mums lined up on a rainy afternoon, with 25,-or 30, buyers. After that rainy show, we decided to move indoors."



New Jersey Department of Agriculture, Alfred W. Murray, assistant secretary, Laura DePrado, of Final Touch Plantscaping, and Kube Pak Family Owner, Rob Swanekamp, in one of the many display "Gardens" at Kube Pak Open House, Sept. 30, in Allentown. Kube

Pak is a wholesale grower of fine garden plants, custom grown plugs, rooted cuttings and finished annuals and perennials. The Open House is a massive, indoor display of thousands of mums, pansies (violas), carnations, (dianthus), as far as the eye could see. A cornucopia of the best this fall season has to offer in flowers and flower combinations in every direction vertically and horizontally that drew buyers more than 200 landscapers and garden center operators who sell to their clients from Washington, D.C. to Pittsburgh, and up to Boston. “The Horticultural Industry in New Jersey is the State’s largest Agriculture sector with 42 percent gross sales. This includes nursery, sod, horticulture and floriculture,” according to New Jersey Department of Agriculture, Alfred Murray, Assistant Secretary. *(Photo: Photo courtesy of Laura DePrado)*

I talked with Kube Pak family owners, and two of the four leading breeders in the world: Gediflora, in Belgium, breeders and propagators of pot chrysanthemums, and PanAmerican Seeds, leader of seeds for Violas, pansies, carnations, many annuals and perennials which is based out of West Chicago, Illinois. Kube Pak grows and sells the root cuttings and seeds bred by these companies.

Kube Pak hosts the open house and orchestrates the display, thousands of Chrysanthemums, Violas, (pansies), and Dianthus, (carnations).

“This is the most unique venue to display seasonal product along with other genetics like mums that are complementary to our seeds,” said John Cotton of PanAmerican Seeds Retail and Development. “It’s an opportunity to interact with local growers with the ideal of furnishing them with the best seeds products possible for this season in this region.”

PanAmerican Seeds, a Ball Horticulture Company, is the leading flower seed breeder in the world. For more than 60 years it markets its products to both wholesale and retail distributors around the globe. The company continually strives to solve grower production and sales issues with high-quality products whose benefits are carried all the way to the consumer level. Its flowers have earned the coveted, “Proven Winners, (PW), label.



Gediflora mums of Belgium displayed on a wheel at Kube Pak Open House, Sept. 30 in Allentown. Kube Pak is a wholesale grower of fine garden plants, custom grown plugs, rooted cuttings and finished annuals and perennials. The Open House is a massive, indoor display of thousands of mums, pansies (violas), carnations, (dianthus), as far as the eye could see. A cornucopia of the best this fall season has to offer in flowers and flower combinations in every direction vertically and horizontally that drew buyers more than 200 landscapers and garden center operators who sell to their clients from Washington, D.C. to Pittsburgh, and up to Boston. *(Photo: Photo courtesy of Laura DePrado)*

In the United States mums are sold August through October. There are 350 commercial varieties on the market, and Gediflora has 100 varieties. Most of the mums sold in Europe are sold only for "All Saints Day," Nov. 1. According to Elien Pieters, managing director, Gediflora, and third Generation owner, "Garden mums, (Chrysanthemums), are one of the very few crops that cannot be imported from outside the U.S. This creates jobs for U.S growers."

She added, "I had no plans to get into horticulture. My father's passion became mine."

I asked Gediflora Director, Bernard Choydyla, what benefits he gets out of this important work in the Industry.

"It makes me happy," he said. "All horticulturalists love plants. People are happy. e do this for the enjoyment," he added.

There are five major colors in mums: yellow is the number one color seller at 35 percent. Second in sales at 20 percent each are pink and purple, bronze/orange, and red, and third in sales, are white mums, at 5 percent. "The Open House, gives the "Wow effect" displaying genetics that Kube Pak has grown that started as 2-inch-long root cuttings to 20-inch tall garden mums," said Choydyla.

Swanekamp shared that people buy mums for color as he dropped, kicked, rolled, pushed, tapped, poked, prodded, and punched the Belgium mums like they were footballs.

"Is color the only criteria that desirable?" he asked. "Criteria is about color brilliance, uniformed shape, and long-lived. I want to have that plant that will have long-lasting colors because of the continuous bud stages," he said.

"The Horticultural Industry in New Jersey, is the State's largest Agriculture sector with 42 percent gross sales. This includes nursery, sod, horticulture and floriculture," according to New Jersey Department of Agriculture, Alfred Murray, Assistant Secretary. "To be at Kube Pak's Open House today and see quality of buyers who are present underscores the industry's appreciation for NJ horticulture and floriculture products. The NJDA is proud to support Kube Pak, and Rob Swanekamp, past president, and vice president of The NJ Board of Agriculture. This Operation at Kube Pak represents one of the many family-owned farms in the State that is the trademark of which is a prime example of New Jersey's Agriculture Industry," Murray said.

The State Board of Agriculture is unique in that it creates and sets policy, (as compared to any other in the U.S.), that is voted upon by delegates at the State Agricultural Convention held in Atlantic City in February each year for the past 100 years. In 2013, and every year since the Board has voted and passed Resolutions supporting "Horticultural Therapy Week" third week of March. This was passed in the form of unanimous support from Full Senate and Assembly, and signed into Law by Governor Chris Christie, in May. New Jersey Executive Director of U.S. Farm Service Agency,

Paul Hlubick, poignantly closed the interview sharing, "As a farmer and spouse of a horticulturalist, I recognize firsthand the healing powers of the Industry,"

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