



MEDIA RELEASE

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Preparing Show-Ready Plants: What Makes the Cut?

Greenhouse Technician Rodger Tschanz speaks on plant production for Canada Blooms

TORONTO, Ont.— The countdown is on to Canada Blooms, where inspired designers and builders will create imaginative indoor garden displays to be showcased over a 10-day span.

Assembled within only six days, feature gardens will be constructed using 1,700 tonnes of sand, 300 cubic yards of mulch, and more than 30 tractor trailer loads of stone and concrete. Furthermore, Canada Blooms will be bringing in 60,000 plants and plant materials, 90% of which are grown directly within Ontario. Because Canada Blooms takes place in early March when growing conditions are somewhat unpredictable, careful planning and preparation are required leading up to the event to deliver plants that are show-ready.

Rodger Tschanz, a greenhouse technician and sessional lecturer at the University of Guelph, is one seasoned grower who understands the amount of time and groundwork that goes into cultivating plants for a large-scale event. Tschanz has been growing large numbers of annuals for the show for over 6 years and this year will be shipping nearly 4,000 plants to the show representing 40 different species and cultivars from plant breeders and suppliers such as Syngneta, Ball and Proven Winners. Growing plants in the winter for Canada Blooms is both a challenge and an educational experience for the volunteers and undergrads that help out. This year, Hanna Peters, a 4th year Zoology and Plant Sciences student, is the primary helper on this project.

“Many factors come into play when it comes to plant selection and preparation for Canada Blooms,” says Tschanz. “We experiment every year with new plants and perform trials under varied lighting conditions to figure out which varieties will hold up best for a ten-day show.”

Deciding which plants make the cut begins with an initial meeting between Tschanz and Canada Blooms. Starting as early as March 2018, Tschanz meets with their planning team to discuss upcoming feature gardens and participant plant requests. Certain types of plants, such as coleus, are used year after year because they perform reliably. That said, new types of plants are also tried to help keep displays fresh and unique every year. Several types of new plants are researched and put through trials to determine which will be able to grow in time and thrive under the dimmed lighting conditions of an indoor showroom.

“Plants that perform well under trials are selected for the show and sometimes grown using staggered planting dates,” says Tschanz. “This year we started our first batch of cuttings around mid-November and continued to seed plants periodically for a few weeks after that. This bracketing of propagation dates ensures we can provide garden designers with options and helps us to achieve full-bloom florals in time for March.”



Besides time management, one of the biggest challenges that growers encounter when preparing for an event like Canada Blooms is ensuring plants receive ample light. Typically, plant producers predict the growth of plant varieties based on spring and summer production times. Since plant materials for Canada Blooms must be grown during the winter when days are shorter and exposure to sunlight is limited, additional time must be added to the overall growing process.

“We often need to add 40-50 extra days to suggested spring production times to guarantee plants secure enough sunlight to bloom,” says Tschanz. “Controlling the quality and intensity of light that plants are exposed to within the greenhouse has immense impact on the amount of time it takes them to grow.”

Spacing plants to make sure they receive adequate light from root-to-tip and rotating plants at different stages of growth between greenhouses with varied light intensities, Tschanz is better able to control lighting conditions and meet production requirements just in time for Canada Blooms. Lucky plants that make the grade this year will be shipped to the Enercare Centre on March 5th, where they will be used by garden designers and builders.

Whether out on display or incorporated as filler, there is no denying that designers this year are looking for vibrant plants that will make a dramatic impact.

“Canada Blooms uses low light features, so design teams are looking for annuals with bright colours and textures that will pop,” says Tschanz. “Notable plants this year will be Hippo White and Hippo Pink Hypoestes, Gomphrena in Truffla Pink, Canary Wing Begonias, Dracula Celosia and Big Blue Salvia.”

Sunflowers, which were popular during last year’s Canada Blooms, will also be making a comeback, along with millet and ornamental corn. New this year, Tschanz has been growing a new series of Downy Mildew resistant impatiens.

Rodger Tschanz will speak about new plants that emerged from the University of Guelph Trial Gardens during a lecture at Canada Blooms on [Friday, March 8th](#), and will also be spending time at the University of Guelph’s booth at the show. A Green Room, demonstrating a collaboration between fine art and horticulture, will be the focal point of the University’s display.

Mark’s Choice is Mark and Ben Cullen’s personal seal of approval on more than 200 gardening products available exclusively at Home Hardware stores across Canada.

Co-located with the National Home Show, Canada Blooms takes place March 8th to 19th, 2019, at the Enercare Centre at Exhibition Place in Toronto. For more information or for tickets, please visit canadablooms.com. Follow Canada Blooms on Twitter [@CanadaBlooms](#) and Like it on [Facebook](#).

About Canada Blooms

Canada Blooms is an annual world-class festival that connects people to the joys and benefits of nature through experiences with gardens and flowers by promoting, educating, inspiring and celebrating all aspects of horticulture. A not-for-profit organization that gives back to the community throughout the year by funding community garden projects around Ontario, Canada Blooms is also dedicated to providing the community with horticulture expertise, education and resources on an ongoing basis.



Now entering its 23rd year, Canada Blooms was founded by Landscape Ontario and The Garden Club of Toronto. Each year it is supported by a committed group of partners, sponsors and volunteers. Canada Blooms has been named One of Ontario's Top 100 Events by Festivals and Events Ontario and One of North America's Top 100 Events by the American Bus Association.

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