



PARTNERS FOR PROFIT

THE FARMERS' MARKET NEWSLETTER FROM

HARRIS® SEEDS

APRIL 2006

Volume 3 Issue 4

EDITOR'S NOTES

Sue Mears

Congratulations to all the winners of the NAFDMA annual competitions! Awards presented at the Austin, TX meeting in January included **Farmers' Market Manager of the Year. Pamela Boyar of the Sunset Valley Farmers' Market** in Austin was the deserving recipient. To learn more about the 100-booth, 8-year-old Market, visit the Sunset Valley Farmers' Market website at www.sunsetvalleyfarmersmarket.org.

MARKET SPOTLIGHT

Sue Mears

River Valley Farmers' Market Bastrop, TX

River Valley Farmers' Market is a thriving Market in Bastrop, TX, with 37 members and prospects for a lot more this year.

On September 9 and 10, 2005, the Market featured a special promotion encouraging customers to **energize and mobilize their lifestyle while incorporating the National 5-A-Day Program in their food choices**. Integrated with the promotion were **newspaper articles, Market posters, food guides, a children's coloring contest, and demonstrations by the local County Extension Agent and an exercise instructor**.



Visit their web site at:

www.rivervalleyfarmersmarket.org.

PROBLEM SOLVERS' CORNER

Kelly Rose

What is an easy way to increase the attendance at your farmers' market? Some bus companies offer their services on the weekend to bring individuals to places they themselves could not get. These bus companies provide **transportation** that would pick up and drop off people that live in such places as nursing homes and retired living facilities. Not only will this increase sales but you will be providing a service to a community that people forget about.

FALL ORNAMENTALS MARKETPLACE

Mark Willis

Harris Seeds offers one of the most extensive product lines for the fall ornamentals marketplace.



Our pumpkin program is second to none. We currently offer **nine different powdery mildew tolerant varieties** – the most in the industry. We have the size to fit your market - from 3-4 lb. hard shell fruit up to 30-40 lb. jack-o-lantern types. We also carry the very popular mini types like Munchkin (orange), Baby Boo (white) and our newest addition Hooligan, which has a unique white, green and orange mottled color pattern on its deeply scalloped fruit.

We also carry a wide selection of Indian corn varieties. Our exclusive large-eared variety Wilda's Pride is one of the most colorful Indian corns available, and our Indian Fingers is a unique miniature variety with its ears averaging just 3½" in length. In addition to these fine items, we also offer a nice selection of broom corns, Pod Corn and other unique ornamental corns.

No fall market display would be complete without **winter squash**, and we have a diverse selection of varieties and types to offer. Whether your market demands acorn, buttercup or butternut types, we have over a dozen varieties to choose from. We also carry a nice selection of specialty winter squashes like Kabocha, Delicata, Vegetable Spaghetti and Blue Hubbard.

Now is the time to start planning what to grow for this fall. Don't miss out on this rapidly growing marketplace.

DISPLAYS - Kelly Rose

Displaying recipes with your vegetables and handing them out on small cards to your customers will draw attention to your booth and give potential customers a reason to stop at your booth. When you see a crowd around a booth, people want to find out what all the commotion is about. Your customers can pass this information on to friends and family, and we all know the best form of advertising is word of mouth.

FOR YOUR GROWERS - Mark Greene

Plastic Mulches

Every grower would like to find a way to **cut down on labor while increasing yields** in their field production, and one way to accomplish this is with the **use of plastic mulches**. The use of these mulches helps to **save on the labor costs of weeding and spraying** weeds throughout the season. Plastic mulches also help **keep the moisture in the soil, reducing watering, and can be a crop saver in drought years**.

Yields can be increased by using mulches in a couple of different ways. First, mulches help **warm up the soil temperatures faster** letting you plant earlier, giving you larger healthier plants and earlier produce for the market. Mulches also **protect the fruit from coming into contact with the ground**, giving the fruit fewer blemishes, protecting them from disease, giving you more marketable fruit.

Besides the traditional black, **plastic mulches come in a variety of colors**, each one with a specific benefit. **Red** mulch has been shown in studies to increase yields and produce earlier tomatoes and strawberries by reflecting red light back up into the plants. **Silver** mulches have been used to help control certain insects by disorienting them with the reflection from the silver mulch. **Olive mulch** has shown the ability to increase the soil temperatures almost as well as clear mulch, while blocking weed growth.

HARRIS SEEDS 355 Paul Road P.O. Box 24966 Rochester, NY 14624-0966
Ph: (800) 544-7938 Fax: (877) 892-9197 growers@harriseseeds.com www.harriseseeds.com



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VALUE ADDED - Sue Mears

One of the real pluses in trade show participation is meeting other vendors, and **Jamie Murphy of Kruger's Farm Market** was literally the first person I met "inside the tent" at the NAFDMA show in Austin, TX, in January. Jamie exhibited and sold Bolga Baskets for Kruger's – just as fast as she could place them on display – and the constant heavy traffic at her booth demonstrated the appeal of her product.

The baskets are ideal for Farmer's Markets on several levels:

- Baskets are **hand-woven in Bolgatanga, Ghana, by farmers** supplementing their income. They're created from elephant grass and colored with plant extracts; the handles are hand-finished with treated goats' hide.
- **Many sizes are available**, including the large market basket, small market basket, shopper basket, and fruit basket – and each basket is individually patterned and colored.



THESE BASKETS ARE GREAT **MARKET FUND RAISERS!!!**

Baskets can be purchased by your Market and sold to shoppers, since they are perfect shopping baskets, household baskets (I have one for magazines), beach, gift, and craft baskets.

Baskets can be purchased by your Market and sold to your vendors, since they are unique and attractive display baskets for fruit and produce. They are also perfect containers for individualized gift baskets, which the vendors can create for their customers.

Reach Jamie at www.krugersbaskets.com or at 503.621.3484 in Portland, OR.

PLAN AHEAD FOR A BOUNTY OF FALL FLOWERS - Sue Guglin

Make time now to plan for Fall sales, so you can add some beautiful autumn flowers to the bounty of fall vegetables and fruits.



Mixed Planters – Many ornamental plants thrive in cooler temperatures and even tolerate frost, so folks can enjoy colorful fall planters for months. Make them large or small, in plastic pots, pumpkin shells, or richly colored ceramic pots – whatever suits your style, market, and imagination.

Varieties from seed or plugs that thrive in cool weather:

Pansy – try the new easy-to-grow Matrix series. **Viola** – Angel series deep colors and 'Spider Mix'. **Carex Bronco** and other Ornamental Grasses, **Dianthus Ideal Select**, **Diascia Diamonte**, **Flowering Cabbage and Kale**, **Gaillardia** (perennial), **Lavender**, **Linaria Enchantment**, and **Nemesia Poetry**.

Varieties from liners that thrive in cool weather: Garden **Chrysanthemums**, **Asters**; **Fall Magic** varieties from Proven Winners, including **Argyranthemum**, **Carex**, **Heuchera**, **Osteospermum**, and **Verbena**.

Cut Flowers – Keep your cut flower supply going into fall with plenty of colors of the season.

- **Sunflowers**, especially Pro Cut Bicolor, Ring of Fire, Monet's Palette, and Infrared Mix.
- **Rudbeckia**, especially Prairie Sun, Autumn Colors, Indian Summer, and Cherokee Sunset.

NATURALLY GROWN ORGANIC

10 Reasons to Go Organic!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

1. **Organic products meet stringent standards** – Organic certification is the public's assurance that products have been grown and handled according to strict procedures without toxic chemicals.
2. **Organic food tastes great!** – Well-balanced soils produce strong, healthy, nourishing plants.
3. **Organic production reduces health risks** – Organic agriculture is one way to prevent any more of these chemicals from getting into the air, earth, and water that sustain us.
4. **Organic farms respect our water resources** – The elimination of polluting chemicals and nitrogen leaching, done in combination with soil building, protects and conserves water resources.
5. **Organic farmers build healthy soil** – Soil is the foundation of the food chain.
6. **Organic farmers work in harmony with nature** – Organic agriculture respects the balance demanded of a healthy ecosystem.
7. **Organic producers are leaders in innovative research** – Organic farmers' research is aimed at reducing pesticides use and minimizing agriculture's impact on the environment.
8. **Organic producers strive to preserve diversity** – Many organic farmers and gardeners have been collecting and preserving seeds, and growing unusual varieties for decades.
9. **Organic farming helps keep rural communities healthy** - It's a lifeline for small farms because it can command fair prices for crops.
10. **Organic abundance** – Foods and non-food alike! – Now every food category has an organic alternative. And non-food agricultural products are being grown organically (such as cotton).

This information is from the Organic Trade Association. www.ota.com

CREATE YOUR OWN EVENTS - Sue Mears

Spring Days at the Market

Turn a cold, rainy Spring Market Day into a huge PLUS with specially designated **Spring Days at your Market!** Make your first Market days a festival of spring color, fragrance, and optimism for the upcoming season by focusing on the UP-side of the season:

- Offer short-term stall rentals to local bedding plant growers. **Display early annuals in full bloom, unusual perennials, and cold-crop vegetable transplants.** Offer container plantings of salad mix, herbs, and early color annuals.
- Invite local herb growers to sell **perennial and hardy annual herbs** – customers are looking for flavor and fragrance this time of year.
- Display and **sell spring shrubs and small trees** – azaleas, rhododendrons, amelanchier, forsythia.
- Feature **cut flowers from bulbs - tulips, daffodils, hyacinths** – combined with pussy willows and ornamental woody stems.
- Include **coffee, hot chocolate, and fresh baked goods** from your vendors – what's better on a cold day?
- Encourage vendors to make and display **garden ornaments, bird houses, stepping stones, small lawn furniture.** This is the season!

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