

Press Release

October 7, 2004

Still Standing Strong: Cherry Lake named FNGLA 2004 Grower of the Year.

Despite a difficult hurricane season, close to 8,000 green industry actors gathered Thursday, September 30th through Saturday, October 2nd, at the Florida Nurserymen and Grower Tradeshow (FNATS) in Orlando, Florida. The event was organized by the Florida Nurserymen, Grower and Landscape Association (FNGLA) and nearly 600 growers, nurserymen and landscapers were present to exhibit quality products and friendly faces. It was a time to regroup, show mutual support and, of course, vent off a little storm aggravation.

The FNATS was also a time to celebrate another year of accomplishments with the FNGLA Landscape Awards Banquet. This year, the prestigious Grower of the Year award was bestowed upon Cherry Lake Tree Farm. The award recognizes Cherry Lake Tree Farm's exemplifying excellence in industry support, innovation and quality production. "The quality of entries just keeps getting better each year," says Tommy Aiello, who serves as Chairman of FNGLA's Landscape Division, which sponsors the Landscape Awards Program. "These awards exemplify the professionalism and excellence that is evident in our industry." Other companies acknowledged during the banquet were Vila & Son Landscaping, Leu Gardens, Disney and MSI Designs.

Carrying the name of Grower of the Year is an outstanding task, but Cherry Lake Tree Farm wears the title well. Cherry Lake had already been given the title in 1993, and has consistently been recognized as a leader in its industry with such awards as the 2000 *Ornamental Outlook* Operation of the Year. And it is not a small industry to lead – the nursery and landscape industry accounts for \$9.9 billion dollars, the largest segment of agriculture in Florida.

It is Cherry Lake's progressive production prac-

tices and unselfish dedication to the industry that have highlighted the company's success. Cherry Lake Tree Farm is one of Florida's leading producers of containerized ornamental trees and a valued supplier to landscape construction firms and developments through the United States.

With over 1,000 acres in production, the farm boasts over 50 varieties of trees ranging from crape myrtles, oaks and hollies to maples, elms, and junipers. A staggering 2 million trees in production make for an impressive availability in all sizes, from 15 gallon to 670 gallons, 25 feet tall trees. In addition, Cherry Lake's



A 670 gallon Bracken Brown Beauty magnolia is over 25 feet tall, and takes 9 years to grow.

liner division, Total Quality Liners, supplies nurseries with liners and 3 gallon trees. The quality and consistency of the crops are further enhanced by Cherry Lake's abundant cultivar selection to include popular Highrise, Cathedral and Hightower oaks, DD Blanchard, Bracken Brown Beauty magnolias, Allee Elms, and Autumn Gold Bald Cypress.

Cherry Lake has even propagated and patented its own cultivars. Being one of the first farms to achieve an efficient level of success in asexually propagating *Magnolia grandiflora*, Cherry Lake choose the Miss Chloe[®] as its own because of the cultivar's impressive fullness at an early age and its very fast growth rate. Their Millennium Oak[®] is very typical of the picturesque and traditional Live Oak species. It boasts a thick trunk, branch and stem caliper, a strong central leader and sturdy branch attachments.



Grower of the Year 2004

(continued)

Cherry Lake is on the cutting edge of the horticultural industry, and dedicates many of its resources to research in best management practices, Integrated Pest Management, root enhancement and new cultivars. For the past 5 years, they have been testing the use of an innovative Air-Pot imported from Scotland. The 3-dimensional, coned shaped Air-Pot is designed so that as the roots reach the wall of the container, they are funneled through the air slits and pruned by the air. This air-pruning mechanism avoids spiraling roots, stimulates the growth of fibrous roots, and makes for a superior rootball.



The innovative 3-dimensional air root pruning design has helped to greatly increase the quality of root systems.

Director of Production, Alan Heinrich explains that Cherry Lake “quickly saw that the Air-Pot was outperforming any other system on the market. I can predict that air-pruning pots will inevitably become the standard of the landscape nursery industry.” Having been a tremendous success on the farm, Cherry Lake is eager to share its innovative root-enhancement practices with others in the industry, and has become the official Air-Pot distributor on the East Coast United States.

The Air-Pot is just one example that sharing what it knows and practices to better the industry is an integral achievement of the FNGLA Grower of the Year. Cherry Lake Tree Farm’s mission statement - *to ‘beautify our environment for generations to come, by providing customized tree solutions for projects where landscaping is considered a key element, while contributing to the success of our valued employees and partners’* - inspires the company to go beyond simply producing and selling quality trees.

Through its continuing education program, Cherry Lake encourages Landscape Architects to come to the farm and attend courses on Florida grades and standards, new varieties and cultivars, or successful compliance with ordinances. The company has also been an active founding sponsor of the Magic of Landscaping conferences, a program designed to educate industry actors and end-users on the value of landscaping. The conferences address topics such as the social and health benefits of landscaping, the added value of landscaping in property value and retail sales, and ways to mitigate environmental impacts like storm water drainage.

While reaching out to its friends and partners of the industry, Cherry Lake is far from forgetting its employees. The company places a strong value and emphasis on the success of its employees and team players, and this became apparent with the creation of Cherry Lake University, which open it first class early this summer. The program is designed for Cherry Lake employees to better their professional skills and their expertise in horticulture and business. Among the courses offered, Cherry Lake University students are attending Arborist Certification, Florida Grades and Standards, Solomon 101 (an accounting program) or Strategic Selling for Sales Superstars. Susan Kelly, Professional Staffing and Development Coordinator at Cherry Lake, hopes that they are “setting the standard for educating and training that others are going to follow”, making Cherry Lake University yet another accomplishment they hope to contribute to the industry at large.

With exemplary and innovative production practices and a drive to actively contribute to the success of the industry, it was a well-deserved honor for Cherry Lake to accept the FNGLA Grower of the Year award last Friday. Ask people what they think of Cherry Lake Tree Farm and you hear will many positive remarks. Some will admire the quality of the product and the organization, others will speak of their leadership and innovation but most significantly many will tell you how Cherry Lake Tree Farm has helped them create beautiful landscape that are sure to leave a lasting legacy. ■

For more information on Cherry Lake Tree Farm, visit www.cherrylake.com.



Timothee Sallin, Director of Business Development, teaching a hands-on course at the farm.

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