



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### **New England Grows! Helps Industry Professionals Learn, Connect and Grow**

They say variety is the spice of life, and New England Grows provides plenty of variety to help green industry businesses prosper. Now in its 16<sup>th</sup> year, the premier green industry event in the Northeast filled out the bright, airy spaces of Boston Convention and Exhibition Center (BCEC) with green industry products and information on February 6-8, 2008.

A sold-out exhibit hall and dozens of packed educational sessions were just a few clues that New England Grows is thriving. The smiling faces of exhibitors and those of riveted educational session participants also tell the story of success.

New England Grows has grown quickly alongside the green industry, which now tops \$4.6 billion in sales per year in New England. This year, total attendance topped 14,250. The event was recently named the fastest growing association-sponsored tradeshow in the U.S. and Canada by *Tradeshow Week*.

### **A World-Class Education**

One of New England Grows' biggest draws is its well-regarded educational program. Participants benefit from valuable continuing education credits, but the information available at the conference goes far beyond that.

This year, a new format emphasized the conference's educational aspects with "Master Classes" for experienced green industry professionals on the event's opening day. New England Grows educational program included more than 30 seminars featuring new ideas, emerging trends and the latest research. Popular session topics were climate change, merchandising techniques, organics, sustainability, insect and disease management, and unique new plants.

The conference has long attracted high-caliber speakers from across the nation and overseas to lead its world-class educational sessions. Among green industry luminaries speaking this year were Robert Hendrickson, Chris Woods, Troy Marden, Art Cameron, Dean Cycon, Page Dickey, and Glynn Percival.

New England Grows has also spiced up its education offerings with more interactive options. Answering a need for a practical way to learn plant identification, this year's event introduced the "Essentials of Plant ID." This innovative learning experience combined a class led by Jack Ahern with a self-guided plant ID challenge on the tradeshow floor.

Adding to the excitement for the hundreds of successful Plant ID challenge participants, a raffle drawing for two digital cameras yielded two lucky winners: Colin Finn from Northeast Nursery in Peabody, Mass. and Thomas P. Smith from Natural Places Landscape Design in South Hadley, Mass.

## **Proven Strategies**

On the opening day, the educational component concluded with a speech from Chris Zane of Zane's Cycles in Branford, CT. His presentation, "Whatever It Takes: The Secrets to Creating Lifetime Customers," was a crowd pleaser. Zane's humorous touch and common-sense approach held the attention of an audience of nearly 3000 New England Grows participants.

Similar to many green businesses, Zane competes not only with small bicycle shops but also with big-box retailers. His differentiator? Customer service. Zane described his philosophy of providing more customer service than most believe is "reasonable" and explained how it actually helps grow sales. He talked about concepts such as selling an experience, pricing as a science and factoring the lifetime value of a customer.

Zane's talk resonated with many. "Chris Zane was an excellent speaker," says Tim Kane of Prides Corner Farm, one of several from his company who heard Zane. "There is always great information at New England Grows that we use in our business."

## **A "Who's Who" of the Green Industry**

With attendance nearing 15,000 annually, New England Grows has truly become a "who's who" of the green industry in the Northeast. Professionals from all segments of the industry attend the event—retailers, landscape contractors, designers, growers, arborists and more. This makes "Grows" an ideal networking event and a great place to do business.

Carol Huntington of Pleasant View Gardens in Loudon, NH, cites the mix of participants as a central reason behind her firm's decision to exhibit at the event. "We go to between 15 and 20 tradeshows a year, but New England Grows is absolutely our favorite," she says. "There is a great selection of people here who really make buying decisions," Huntington adds.

Seventy-four percent of New England Grows attendees make, or directly influence, buying decisions. Participants can talk to multiple potential suppliers at one time and in one place, enhancing the efficiency of the event.

For exhibitors, “Grows” provides cost-effective and convenient access to one of the largest sales regions in the country. Exhibitor Lenny Cleaves of Cleaves Co. in Needham, Mass. explains, “It’s much more efficient for us to come here than to put sales people on the road.”

The BCEC’s proximity to the entire Northeast and all major transportation systems has certainly helped the event grow. Originally held at the Hynes Convention Center, the event moved to the BCEC in February 2005 and attendance has soared ever since.

“Boston is a destination,” explains Jeffrey Plotka of Precision Work, Inc. in Port Washington, NY. “There is a reason for a whole host of people to come to New England Grows, not just someone who needs a lawnmower.”

### **Critical Information and Practical Concepts**

There is more on offer than first meets the eye on New England Grows’ tradeshow floor. One-on-one meetings with university faculty and extension personnel at the Great-Ideas Pavilion give information about the latest and most important research. Also nestled into the exhibit space are three learning parks—Arbor, Fieldstone and Garden Park—featuring critical information, hands-on demonstrations and training.

This year, Arbor Park focused on insect and disease management in arboriculture. Arborist representatives from Bartlett Tree Experts led tours of insect- and disease-damaged samples. Also offered were for-credit classes on plant healthcare and demonstrations of Bartlett Tree’s customized tree inventory system, Bartlett Inventory Solutions (BIS), which uses two separate technologies to produce a long-term tree care plan.

Sponsored by North Carolina grower Novalis, Garden Park provided an inspirational setting for learning. Classes focused on sales strategies for retail garden centers were on the agenda. So was relaxation. Toward the end of one day, attendees reclined on patio furniture in a full-scale patio area complete with a deck, plantings and a full-scale Viking outdoor kitchen.

In Fieldstone Park, attendees could see Proven Winner plants at work in a carefully designed and beautifully executed commercial landscape sponsored by Pleasant View Gardens. Stone walls and walkways from Ideal Concrete Block accented stunning beds and window boxes. Café-style and park bench seating provided a comfortable place for participants to congregate.

### **Food, Fun and Conversation**

Whether it’s early morning at the brand-new Jump Start Café or lunchtime on the tradeshow floor, participants had ample opportunity for face time with colleagues. Impromptu picnic gatherings broke out on the exhibit floor and participants crowded the BCEC food venues.

Regardless of where they convene, many view the event as a yearly opportunity to visit with colleagues. George Mellick of Shelter Tree in North Attleboro, Mass. says,

“New England Grows is our catch-up time with folks we don’t see the rest of the year. If we don’t show up, people will wonder where we are.”

Inserting an added element of fun and excitement into this year’s event, New England Grows unveiled the Retailers’ Choice Awards, a special program to recognize the hottest new ideas and trends by and for retail garden centers. The program cast a spotlight on many exciting new products:

- Tufo Volcanic Stone--Rich Morris at Toad Flax Nursery (Glen Falls, NY)
- Old Glory Bell Pot Collection--River Market Pottery (Kansas City, MO)
- Kid Classics Gardener Gloves--West County Gardener (San Francisco)
- Philadelphus ‘Snow White Sensation’--Novalis Carolina Nurseries (Moncks Corner, SC), The Conard-Pyle Company (West Grove, PA) and Imperial Nursery (Granby, CT)
- Begonia bipinnatifida--AG 3 (Eustis, FL)
- First Editions® Light-O-Day® Hydrangea--Bailey Nurseries (St. Paul, MN)
- Recycled Hardwood Rocker from Two Palms Casual (Norfolk, VA)
- Snap-off, Two-part Plant Tags--Gilbertie’s Herb Gardens (Easton, CT)
- Container Gardening Potting Station--Sunrise Marketing (Hartford, CT)
- Lechuza Planters with Sub-Irrigation--Lechuza (Cranbury, NJ)
- Miniature and Dwarf Conifer Program--Stanley & Sons Nursery (Boring, OR)
- Variegated Yucca--Overdevest Nurseries (Bridgeton, NJ)

### **By the Industry, For the Industry**

Supported by all of the region’s major green industry associations and more than 30 co-sponsors, New England Grows is organized for the benefit of the industry. Founded in 1993, the conference joined together four formerly separate trade shows run by major green industry associations in the region: New England Nursery Association, Associated Landscape Contractors of Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Arborists Association, and Massachusetts Nursery & Landscape Association.

New England Grows has a reputation for supporting horticultural research programs and giving back to the community in meaningful ways. Every year, it donates a substantial sum to benefit the six New England Cooperative Extension systems. To date, “Grows” has awarded more than \$400,000 in grants to research programs that help shape the future of the green industry in New England.

The organization also has begun a five-year, \$50,000 commitment to help kids through horticulture with the Boston Schoolyard Initiative. The BSI is a public/private partnership between the Boston Schoolyard Funders Collaborative and the City of Boston and is dedicated to revitalizing the City’s schoolyards and neighborhoods.

### **Looking Forward to Next Year**

Planning has already begun for next year’s New England Grows. That’s good news for many who are eager to return. “This is the premier show that we do and we always look forward to next year,” said Fred Adams of Ideal Concrete in Westford, Mass.

New England Grows 2009 will be held from Wednesday, February 4 through Friday 6, 2009 at the BCEC. Based on feedback from this year, exhibit hours during next year's event will begin at noon on opening day and will end at 2 p.m. on the last day.

Where will you be next February? New England Grows will be waiting to welcome you with fresh ideas, new connections and cutting-edge strategies to help keep you and your company ahead of the competition.