

Yard and Garden - 12-31-2011 - Ted Griess / Extension Horticulture Assistant

Leaders of organizations and other assorted businesses study long and hard before they adopt an official logo. Typically, a logo is a word, a phrase, an image, a shape, a symbol or a combination of all these elements. Logos subliminally and overtly communicate to us, the consumer, the organization's identity as well as the products and services it provides. Many logos are registered with the U.S. government. Before establishing a logo, organizations go to great lengths researching what shapes, images, words and even colors to use in their logo. All of these elements communicate a message.

Let us examine the shape of a shield. The shield has long symbolized strength, power, durability and dependability. Many organizations utilize this shape in their logos for that very reason. The National Football League and the National Hockey League respectively utilize the shield in their logos. Both organizations have their initials superimposed over the shield. In addition, the NFL's logo communicates using certain colors. Its entire logo consists of three colors: red, white and blue. Living here in the United States, we all know that these colors when used together stand for America and patriotism..

Did you know that in the world of horticulture, an organization also uses a red, white, and blue shield in its logo? This organization is the All-America Selections, or AAS.

AAS began nearly eighty years ago. In 1932 a Southern seeds man by the name of Ray Hastings realized that gardeners in the United States knew little about new garden varieties and had few resources to obtain reliable information. He proposed the idea of All-America Selections as a way for home gardeners to learn which new varieties were truly improved. Mr. Hastings recommended a national network of trial grounds throughout North American climates where flower and vegetable varieties would be grown and evaluated by skilled, impartial judges.

Today this organization continues to flourish. The mission of AAS has always been to promote new garden seed varieties with superior garden



performance. The judges of each trial garden look for desirable qualities such as ease of growing, total yield, quality of fruit, length of flowering season, flower color, and disease and pest resistance. For an entry to be considered as a recipient for an AAS award, it must display at least two significantly improved qualities. Following the trial period where these new, never-before-sold varieties are tested, the AAS judges submit their evaluations to the board of directors who then select only the best performers. Today, winners are chosen based on the highest scores received from judges at thirty-four sites throughout the U.S and Canada.

In addition to trial gardens, AAS also has display gardens for the public to view the new AAS winners in an attractive setting. Nearly 200 dedicated display gardens exist throughout North America. In Nebraska, two display gardens have served the public for at least twenty-five years. They are the University of Lincoln/Nebraska Backyard Farmer Garden in Lincoln and the Metro Community College Garden in Omaha. During the peak season, these display gardens also offer to the public educational programs.

Over the years, All-America Selections' winners have become a standard in my garden. Their superior performance has proven itself repeatedly.

The next time you visit your local nursery or when your new 2012 seed catalogs arrive, I urge you to look for the registered red, white and blue shield with the words All-America Selections Winners. That is one logo you can definitely trust.

Next week I will announce the 2012 AAS winners. In the meantime, Happy New Year!