PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It’s good to see all segments of the industry growing: vegetables, herbs, annuals, perennials, cut flowers, and indoor plants. Collectively the industry’s work on breeding, developing, trialing, promoting and ultimately growing quality plants for in store and online sales will help existing and new consumers be more successful. We want all consumers to achieve the physical and mental health benefits from their plants and gardening activities...life is better when you are a Plant Person.

AAS Trials are at a tipping point; the newly added trial categories help identify amazing plants for changing consumer demands. Multiyear perennial trials, container and inground options and our standard edible and ornamental trialing have produced 18 new AAS Winners for 2022. We’ve seen a resurgence of breeders entering high quality varieties into AAS trials which has resulted in THREE! recent Gold Medal winners. It was 17 years since the last gold medal was awarded and now we have several to talk to consumers about. (see page 23 of this report). Gold medal winners have an even higher threshold to pass and the judges across the USA and Canada confirmed that these exceptional plants deserved the AAS Gold Medal Award.

We can’t wait for consumers to get their hands on these “Tested Nationally & Proven Locally” high performing plants. Keep sending your new genetics to our trials and we will select and promote only the best for the North American consumer.

Scott Rusch
AAS President, Express Seed Company
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Our Mission:

"To promote new garden varieties with superior garden performance judged in impartial trials in North America."
FINANCIAL REPORT

Reserves are used as needed to increase AAS Winner awareness in the industry and among the general public. Revenue in 2021 rebounded from the COVID impact of 2020.

While we expect the heightened awareness of AAS in the industry and with consumers to result in continued revenue growth, the AAS staff is also managing costs carefully. As a result, AAS continues to be in a strong and stable financial position.

Adaptable to challenges and industry changes related to COVID, the AAS staff is poised to keep AAS relevant in the industry through innovative marketing efforts and a keen focus on the selection process and what it means to be an AAS winner. I am excited about the 2022 season results and look forward to continued years of growth for AAS and our industry.
While COVID was still a factor in 2021, our industry also realized the impact of an exponential number of new gardeners. Additional sales for breeding companies drove breeding efforts, resulting in one of the top 5 entry years ever. With less COVID related restrictions, we were back to full judge participation and received complete results in order for the board to confirm the winners. Assessment accruals were on par with pre-COVID 2019 revenues. The vast majority of consumers new to gardening polled suggest they will continue to garden and thus far, late 2021 and early 2022 industry sales suggest this to be the case. We expect breeding companies will continue to submit more entries going forward as a result.

Entries vs. Winners 2012 – 2022
Without entries, there would be no winners!

Rebecca Siemonsma
AAS Treasurer, Dummen Orange
STRATEGIC PLANNING UPDATE

Our end of year review for Strategic Planning was very productive as we reflected on our new strategies we set for 2021. We were able to mark several of them completed and plan to focus on others for completion in 2022. As a reminder, we set four main Objectives of focus and twelve Strategies to execute within those Objectives. Our 4 main Objectives were: Grow the Brand, Generate Quality Entries and Winners, Expand Reach into New Segments, and Streamline for Operational Excellence. We were able to complete 5 of the 12 strategies already with significant progress made on the others.

Here are some examples of the progress we’ve made:
Our A+ priority Strategies that were targeted to be completed in 2021 or have priority focus for progression have made significant strides. One of those priorities was to create a vetting process for new entries as part of the Generate Quality Entries and Winners objective. A task force was created around this and the recommendations from them are in the process of being implemented by way of updates to our entry form. We also are continuing discussions on this objective as a whole to garner the best entries for our program.

As part of our objective to Expand Reach to New Segments, our strategy to educate breeders on the value of having an AAS winner has resulted in a webinar to be able to explain the benefits, share all the updates that have been made to the program over the years, and address any misconceptions. There is so much marketing and promotion support that AAS provides to its winners that the value a breeder gets for its investment is well worth it. AAS’ ability to focus on marketing to the consumer, something breeders don’t necessarily have resources to do, is a huge benefit to getting that pull through and demand at retail that retailers and growers absolutely need.

Another A+ priority was more effective use of board meeting time as part of the Streamline for Operational Excellence objective. We’ve implemented several more organizational strategies and structure for meetings so that the board is focusing on the most important topics for discussion and approval. (continued on next page)
We are migrating to Microsoft Teams which will continue to improve time management. The creation of Task Forces for special projects and a structure for reporting updates into the Board has been very effective for monitoring progression and needs.

Other A priorities were to engage more with brokers, plug producers and finished growers to increase visibility of AAS winners as part of our Grow the Brand objective. This resulted in specific communications created for brokers and getting AAS winners listed on availability lists from growers and making certain they were labeled as AAS winners. Thank you to all our partners that continue to work with us and help call out these genetics so your customers know they have been “tested nationally and proven locally”.

We also continue to make progress with the potential to work with a large retailer to develop a national branded program to create a larger retail footprint and focus for AAS winners. Challenges with plastics are a concern for a branded pot program, but the potential this strategy has for promoting AAS winners at a big box retailer is worth figuring out how to overcome challenges.

We look forward to accomplishing the rest of the Strategies we outlined last year and continuing to expand on the priority strategies that will make AAS the most relevant, productive, and effective trialing organization. In the industry. Be on the lookout for more exciting updates from AAS!

Alicain Carlson
AAS Vice President, Strategic Planning Chair, Syngenta Flowers
MARKETING: WHERE IT BEGAN

The Past.
All-America Selections was founded by W. Ray Hastings, president of the Southern Seedsmen’s Association in 1932. As All-America Selections celebrates its 90th anniversary, we look to the past to understand where we have been, where we are now and where we are going in the future.

In many ways, what AAS does today is to continue the vision of Ray Hastings which can be found in our mission statement, “to promote new garden varieties with superior garden performance judged in impartial trials in North America.” That simple goal still drives our mission today with even more emphasis put on promoting AAS award winners to consumers.
The Present.

Today, our efforts are led by Diane Blazek, Executive Director and our dedicated staff. Our volunteer Board of Directors, judges and committee members work diligently to continue AAS' mission.

And while our goals are unwavering since our founding, the tools we now use may come as quite a surprise to our founding father. The extensive publicity provided AAS Winners by garden and lifestyle blogs, social media, various websites, “How-to” and tips videos and webinars were unheard of 90, 50 and even 20 years ago. Trade shows and print media, common in years past, remain a vital part of our marketing plan but just a small portion compared to what was the majority back in the 20th century. Mr. Hastings also had no idea back in 1932 the role that plants propagated through vegetative cuttings (URC’s) would play during AAS’ 90th anniversary as each year, more and more non-seed varieties become AAS Winners and are promoted as such.

2021 witnessed the highest number of AAS display gardens (203) and AAS Introduction Gardens (12) ever. Our AAS website continues to attract attention with a 300% increase in visits and visitors since 2017. We’ve come a long way since we began tracking social media stats. In just the past four years, we have seen our social media community increase threefold, an impressive number considering these increases are all done organically with no paid online advertising.

Additionally, AAS has collaborated and worked closely with our fellow non-profit, the National Garden Bureau (NGB) in producing the inaugural 2021-2022 Crop Trend Report. The report will provide Plant and Seed Brokers/Distributors, Growers and Retailers an insider view on crop trends necessary to make business decisions based on insights from the plant breeding community.

2021 was an exciting year for AAS as we awarded the first AAS Gold Medal Winner in over 17 years. Zinnia Profusion Red Yellow Bicolor took home the medal. That was quickly followed up by Begonia Viking Explorer Rose on Green and Petunia Bee’s Knees as additional Gold Medal Winners. These stunning varieties show the confidence that top-quality breeding companies have in our program.
The Future.

As AAS marketing and promotional efforts continue to increase and evolve, so will the genetics we promote. We envision ever-increasing engagement with smaller breeders, particularly off-continent, Europe and other locales. We envision building even better relationships with brokers and growers as they continue to embrace our winning varieties. And we envision more, and larger, retailers recognizing the benefits of carrying and selling AAS Winners.

As North America’s oldest, only and most prestigious non-profit trialing and marketing organization, why wouldn’t breeders look to us to help get their plants into the hands of consumers.

We encourage every segment of the industry to join in the excitement as we stay in tune with breeding, stay in touch with the consumer and stay on top of trends. We exist to rate the genetics our respected breeding companies present. The next job is to promote the varieties our judges deem are exceptional. The tools we have to do those promotions will only increase as technology increases and the world gets smaller. Won’t you join with us?

Joe Cimino
AAS Marketing Committee Chair, Sakata Seed America
MARKETING: VIDEOS ARE KING!
Created by Industry, for the Industry, the new 2021-2022 Crop Trend Report from National Garden Bureau fills the information gap that many in the plant industry have been requesting for years – a historical view of crop performance. National Garden Bureau is pleased to offer this inaugural 2021-2022 Crop Trend Report that will provide Plant and Seed Brokers/Distributors, Growers and Retailers an insider view on crop trends necessary to make business decisions.

The data used to compile this report comes from the three Breeder-Producer Market Share Surveys National Garden Bureau has been conducting for the past 30+ years. From this information, NGB has taken the opportunity to create a high-level summary of crop trends for the benefit of all channel partners. Commentary for each crop has been provided by the survey participants who are subject matter experts. The commentary underscores the trend line with insights on breeding direction and market changes. In this inaugural year, the 2021-2022 Crop Trend Report includes details on 20 annual crops, 14 perennial crops, 10 shrubs, 12 edibles and two seasonal crops.

This 2021-2022 Crop Trend Report is now available for purchase by horticulture industry segments as outlined below.

- Brokers, Growers & Retailers, who are NGB Members: $3,000
- Brokers, Growers & Retailers, who are not NGB Members: $4,500
- Education/Academia: $3,000
- Market Share Survey participating breeders/NGB Members: $1,500
- Market Share Survey participating breeders/non-NGB Members: $2,500
- Non-participating breeders of the Market Share Survey, media and market research companies and all others not listed above: $50,000

To obtain the member discount, please consider joining National Garden Bureau to support the industry’s only non-profit ambassador for gardening. Five different membership tiers are described on the NGB website. For more information on membership, please contact Diane Blazek or Membership Coordinator Gail Pabst.

To purchase the 2021-2022 NGB Crop Trend Report, please email Diane Blazek your intent to purchase. NGB will then send an invoice for payment. Once payment is received, NGB will forward a PDF copy of the 2021-2022 Crop Trend Report.
AAS Judges
AAS is honored to have 87 dedicated horticultural professionals judging the 7 AAS Trials. Our volunteer judges are spread across North America where they grow and evaluate all entries against comparison varieties, providing unbiased feedback to help us determine AAS Winners.

AAS’ success in identifying superior garden varieties is made possible by our team of judges, we are grateful to them for their time and expertise. To learn more about these amazing individuals, read their Judge Biographies here.

AAS Trials
AAS has 7 trials in which breeders may enter their new varieties for evaluation:
1. Edible Container – new in 2021
2. Edible In-ground
3. Ornamental Non-Seed Container
4. Ornamental Non-Seed In-ground – new in 2021
5. Ornamental Seed Container – new in 2021
6. Ornamental Seed In-ground
7. Perennial

The 2021 trials produced the first winners from our new trials:
- Edible Container: Pepper Quickfire F1 (National)
- Ornamental Non-Seed Inground: Verbena Beats Purple+White (National)
- Ornamental Seed Container: Begonia Viking Explorer Rose on Green F1 (Gold Medal)
- Ornamental Seed Container: Celosia Flamma Orange (National)
The Combined Judges Committee has continued identifying ways to make AAS Judges more informed and connected. Because COVID travel restrictions once again postponed our annual Summer Summit in 2021, the AAS Judges, Board of Directors, and other guests were invited to join our virtual summer meeting where trials were discussed and horticulture industry legend Barry Ruta was presented with the Medallion of Honor (see page 18).

Thanks to suggestions from judges and committees, AAS has developed plans to hold multiple virtual meetings before and during the trialing season. This year, our first meeting was held in early March to introduce all entries and comparisons. Our mid-season Judges meeting and trial discussion will be held ON SITE during our first in-person Summer Summit since 2019! We also plan to schedule a final virtual forum shortly before evaluations are due.

AAS office staff also created a mailing list for each region so judges can collaborate on trial questions and observations with their local judges. Plans are also in the works to coordinate more meetings between judges and others in the industry—one suggestion was a meeting between selected breeders and judges for a discussion of the trialing process and the breeding work that leads up to that.

The other exciting development to come out of meetings is the decision to remove provisional status from first year judges, which will allow all judges to participate equally in our organization. First year judges will still be provided with additional support from the AAS office and are encouraged to reach out to the mentor list provided for each trial (or version of Mercado) for any questions that arise during the trialing season.

AAS appreciates all of the wonderful judges who volunteer their time and efforts to identify ornamentals, edibles, and perennials that are worthy of the AAS Winner designation!

**Jessie Liebenguth**
AAS Combined Judges Committee Chair, Reiman Gardens
DISPLAY GARDENS

Want to see the latest AAS Winners? Look no further than one of our nearly 200 AAS Display Gardens.

The AAS Display Garden program is one of the many benefits enjoyed by the breeders of AAS Winners. Public gardens, arboretums, schools and universities, master gardeners and municipalities participate as AAS Display Gardens, showcasing the latest AAS Winner varieties and educating the public on AAS and AAS Winners. Each year the gardens receive and grow the AAS Winners currently under assessment, both seed and non-seed varieties.

Of the 199 AAS Display Gardens:
150 display Flowers and Edibles
41 display Flowers only
8 display Edibles only

Something we are especially proud of is the increasing engagement rate between our office and our Display Garden contacts. In just one year, our newsletter open rate increased more than 2 percent!
All AAS Display Gardens are encouraged to participate in the annual Landscape Design Challenge. The theme for 2021 was “Diversity in the Garden.” The challenge allows the gardens to show their creativity while promoting AAS Winners to their visitors in new and exciting ways.

The 2021 Challenge winners were:
Category 3: Ashton Gardens at Thanksgiving Point, Lehi, UT
Category 2: Purdue Extension Marion County Demonstration Garden, Indianapolis, IN
Category 1: Lee College Horticulture Program, Huntsville, TX

As mentioned on the previous page, the AAS Display Gardens are engaging more and more with our programs. Here is a comparison of the number of LDC participants in recent years:

- 2018: 21 gardens
- 2019: 20 gardens
- 2020: 19 gardens
- 2021: 28 gardens
Smith Gardens became one of the first AAS Perennial Trial sites in 2016 so naturally we became an AAS Introduction Garden in 2020.

Every year we host a new variety showcase event for everyone in the industry. Here we can educate other growers, retailers, horticulture educators, master gardeners and sales/merchandising teams on what great new varieties are coming to the market. This gives us the perfect opportunity to display and discuss all the AAS Winners that have excellent performance here in the Pacific Northwest.

Click here for a list of all AAS Introduction Gardens.
MEDALLION OF HONOR AWARD

All-America Selections honored a well-respected industry icon during the 2021 AAS Virtual Summer Summit and Judge’s Meeting. The 2021 Medallion of Honor was awarded to Mr. Barry Ruta

Former colleague and friend, Vicky Rupley of Harris Seeds created and presented the heart-warming presentation that highlighted Barry’s 56 year career in horticulture. Barry began his career while in high school by working for Chicagoland garden retailer Amlings. After graduating from Illinois Benedictine College in 1971 with a BS degree in Biology, Barry moved to Florida and began working at Speedling, Inc. Then an opportunity arose and he joined the Sluis & Groot team from 1989-1995. Barry rejoined Speedling again in 1995 where he worked for six years, until 2001, when he took on a role with American Takii where he stayed until his retirement in 2010. But no one can keep Barry from continuing to contribute to the industry, so he joined Hem Genetics in 2012 where he is part of Hem’s North American marketing team. Throughout his career, Barry has always been a strong and positive advocate for All-America Selections and the winning varieties that he helped promote. Barry also served on the AAS Board of Directors for two terms, from 2004 until his retirement in 2010.

Congratulations Barry!
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Officers:**
President: Scott Rusch, Express Seed
Oberlin, OH 44074

Past President: Jim Devereux, Green Fuse Botanicals
Santa Monica, CA 90402

Vice President: Alicain Carlson, Syngenta Flowers,
Gilroy, CA 95020

Treasurer: Rebecca Siemonsma, Dummen Orange
Columbus, OH 43215

**Directors:**

Joe Cimino, Sakata Ornamentals, Morgan Hill, CA 95037

Vaughn Fletcher, Fletcher Consulting, Liberty, MO 64068

Chelsey Lenczyk, Bejo Seeds, Perkasie, PA 18944

Jessie Liebenguth, Reiman Gardens, Ames, IA 50011

Penny Merritt-Price, Young's Plant Farm, Auburn, AL 36830

Denise Mullins, Smith Gardens, Marysville, WA 98271
COMMITTEES

Marketing/Communications Committee
Joe Cimino, Chair
Jenny Kuhn
Gail Pabst
Chelsey Lenczyk
Mark Konlock
Denise Mullins
Alicain Carlson
Scott Rusch, ex officio

Ornamental from Seed Comparison Committee
Penny Merritt-Price, Chair
Todd Perkins
Rob Fluit
Scott Newton
George Park

Non-Seed Ornamental Comparison Committee
Vaughan Fletcher, Chair
Jim Devereux
Al Gerace
Denise Mullins
Mark Konlock with Horticulturist, Seth Heder

Edible (Other) Comparison Committee
Heather Kibble, Chair
Chelsey Lenczyk
Steve Bellavia
Stephanie Ludwig
Kristen Noble
Chris Chechek

Edible (Tomatoes and Peppers) Comparison Committee
Josh Kirschenbaum, Chair
Patty Buskirk
Greg Styers
Keith Lewis
Pieter Westerbeek

Perennials Comparison Committee
Richard Hawke, Chair
Mark Dwyer
Nanci Hollerith Allen
Denise Mullins

Combined Judges Committee
Jessie Liebenguth, Chair, judge
Jenny Boxell, staff
Patty Buskirk, judge
Jenny Kuhn, judge
Connie Bijl, judge
Rodger Tschantz, judge
Denise Mullins, judge
LOOK FOR THESE LOGOS WHERE YOU BUY YOUR FLOWER AND VEGETABLE SEED AND PLANTS

aaswinners.com
Begonia Viking Explorer Rose on Green F1

Petunia Bee's Knees
Verbena Beats Purple+White

Verbena Vanity F1
Celosia Flamma Orange F1

Sunflower Concert Bell F1
EDIBLE NATIONAL WINNERS

Pepper Quickfire F1

Pepper Buffy F1
EDIBLE REGIONAL WINNERS

Tomato Pink Delicious F1

Watermelon Century Star F1

Tomato Sunset Torch F1
Announcing...

National Garden Bureau's Year of crop classes for 2023

Year of the Rudbeckia
Year of the Broccoli
Year of the Celosia
Year of the Orchid
Year of the Spiraea
Year of the Amaryllis
2022 SUMMER SUMMIT IN IOWA

https://all-americaselections.org/aas-meetings-events/

Make plans to attend the AAS, HGSA and NGB Summer Summit in Des Moines, Iowa

Celebrate All-America Selections’ 90th Anniversary!

Visits include: Robert D. Ray Asian Garden Walk, Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden, State Fair Ground, Downtown Des Moines Sculpture Park, Iowa State University Seed Testing Lab, Private Garden Tour, Reiman Gardens, Jack Trice Stadium and more!

August 2-4, 2022
Des Moines, Iowa
2023 SUMMER SUMMIT IN VANCOUVER

Vancouver!
Hard to say no to this beautiful area of North America!

This event was originally planned, then canceled, planned then
canceled and is now planned again but for 2023.

Join AAS, along with National Garden Bureau and the Home
Garden Seed Association in late summer 2023 for an amazing
adventure visiting these and and many other beautiful Pacific
Northwest growing and research operations:

* West Coast Seeds
* Minter Country Garden
* VanBelle Nursery
* VanDusen Botanical Garden
* UBC Botanical Gardens
* Qualitree Propagators

September 5-8, 2023
Vancouver, B.C.