

BP Flower Farm selected by Ball Horticulture as Burpee Home Gardens Certified Growers

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TAYLORVILLE — Going above and beyond the normal services, BP flower farm offers a variety of activities in addition to the vegetables and flowers they have in stock. J.C. and Connie Large, owners of the business, cater to their gardeners, teaching them how to grow and nurture their flower or vegetable beds successfully.

"I use my own beds to test plants and flowers to make sure they are compatible for our area. We grow from seed and we also use a vegetative cutting process to cultivate our plants. We do not sell seed packets, we sell plants" says Connie.

"We use other tools to determine which plants are best, take our annual tomato tasting party in August. Guests complete a scorecard after taste testing several types of tomatoes. This helps us select the best tomato for eating and growing the following year. This year we will open it up to the public" says Connie. "This is only one of the events we provide throughout the season."

The BP Flower Farm calendar includes food gardening and herb seminars, an annual container day, water gardening A-Z, and a customer

appreciation party. BP has a landscape designer on hand for presentations, and an "outdoor room" is available for meetings or bridal showers. Adding a new feature this year, weekly specials. Connie will spotlight a different perennial each week.

A big change this year at the farm is the announcement of a brand new program called Burpee Home Gardens Certified Growers. BP Flower Farm has partnered with Ball Horticultural, a nationally known company, to become the only local garden center within 80 miles to offer this exclusive program. Burpee plants will be grown by BP Flower Farm and available for purchase taking the guess work out of starting your own garden.

Burpee, a recognized name in gardening, has been in the

seed business over 100 years, offering their products via mail catalogue, retailers, or more recently the Internet. This is the first time selected retailers will grow a collection of their vegetables, herbs, and flowers and sell the live plants.

"We will be growing many vegetables plants that Burpee has offered only as seeds in the past. We are thrilled to be a part of this program" says J.C. who specializes in the vegetable side of the business. "I have 44 varieties of tomatoes and 12

varieties of pepper plants, including a new but limited sweet seedless tomato. We allow our customers to place early orders making it easier to manage inventory. I have already received orders for over 950 tomato plants and 500 pepper plants." Other vegetables include potatoes, onion, cabbage, zucchini, cucumbers, broccoli, and cauliflower.

"The gardens offer an escape for me, and the plants don't talk back" said J.C. "I am rewarded when someone approaches me and tells me how well their plants are doing. Or a person comes up and finds one of my vegetables to be exactly what they are looking for."

Connie who handles the flower end of the business shares her greenhouse space with the vegetables and her granddaughter. "I love sneaking away to my own gardens, it is relaxing and I enjoy spending time there with my granddaughter, Paige. Seeing her face light up from the beauty of a simple petunia."

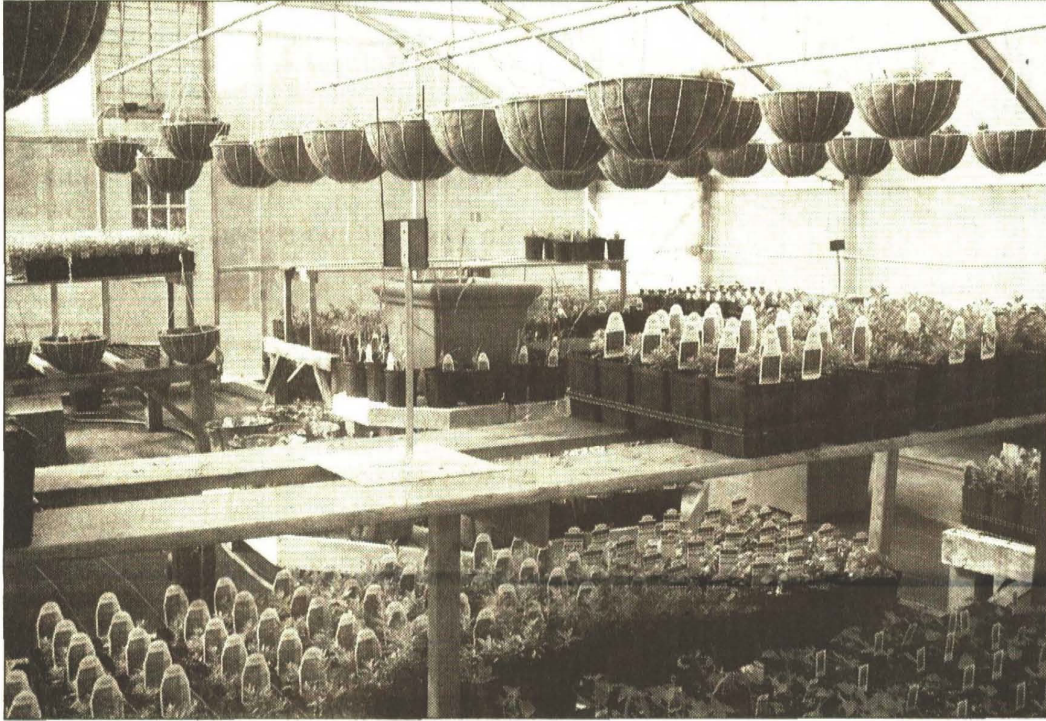
Growing on the shelves of the humid environment are both annual and perennial blossoms plus some tropical plants. BP also carries shrubs such as hydrangea, red twig dogwood, and roses. "I'm particularly excited about the new petunia we are growing. This 'proven winner' petunia is protected by U.S. and Canadian patents and is being offered

this year for the first time" said Connie.

J.C. and Connie remain active with their original jobs in the crop insurance field. J.C. is a marketing representative and Connie recently changed to a consultant. "As the flower business grew it was no longer possible to carry on my full time duties. I decided to switch to consulting and focus more on the gardening" states Connie.

"During a hectic time when our son was getting married J.C. bought our first greenhouse. It was suppose to be for used to grow flowers that I couldn't find. Over the years we have expanded to three green houses and we are using 1 1/2 acres on our property to grow vegetables" said Connie. BP Flower Farm got its name from

J.C.'s ancestry, he is a decedent of the first settlers in Buckeye Prairie, the area surrounding their farm located just off the Nokomis blacktop.



TAYLORVILLE — Young plants soak up the sun daily in their greenhouse home at BP Flower Farm. Shelves are stocked with a variety of vegetables, flowering and tropical plants, and hanging baskets ready for opening day April 10, 2010. For more information please visit the website www.bpflowerfarm.com. (Christine Lockwood/Breeze Courier)



TAYLORVILLE — BP Flower Farm offers more than just vegetables and flowers. This garden center wants to teach the consumer how to successfully grow their gardens. Already into the growing season, 3 greenhouses are filled with tropical plants, vegetables, flowering plants and shrubs. Connie and J.C. Large are pictured here with just a sample of plants they have available. (Christine Lockwood/Breeze Courier)



TAYLORVILLE — Vibrant and brilliant are words that hardly describe the splendor of this 2010 Proven Winner introduction. Proven Winners offer high quality flowering plants. A 2 to 3 year plant selection process results in the best, most unique, and highest performing plants. Proven Winners and Burpee Home Gardens are plant and vegetable lines carried by BP Flower Farms of Owaneco. (Christine Lockwood/Breeze Courier)
