

Homestead Gardens: A Garden Center that Gives Back

by Courtney Capstack

IF YOU GO TO Homestead Gardens in Davidsonville, Maryland, expecting another ordinary garden center, you're going to be pleasantly surprised.



Don Riddle, Jr.

"We are a destination garden center and have created a true shopping experience," says Homestead's founder and owner **Don Riddle, Jr.** Homestead offers elaborate plant displays, children's activities, educational seminars, a snack bar, and even a herd of friendly llamas. And as one of the mid-Atlantic region's largest nurseries, it also has one of the region's largest plant selections.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Originating as a family business in 1973, Homestead Gardens, located near Annapolis, now has some 350 employees, a retail garden center located on 50 acres, and two 100-acre farms.

Living by the company motto: "It's not where we are today that counts. It is where we are going to be tomorrow," the staff at Homestead keeps an eye on the ever-evolving plant industry. "You might reach a certain level of success today, but that's fleeting unless you adapt with the times," says Riddle. "We're constantly working to be a better company in all aspects."

Homestead's commitment to excellence has paid off, garnering the company numerous awards, including being the

For more information about Homestead Gardens, visit www.homesteadgardens.com. To find out more about AHS's corporate partnerships, e-mail Sue Galvin at sgalvin@ahs.org.

first recipient of the Garden Center of the Year Award, sponsored by the Garden Centers of America (GCA). The nursery is consistently listed as one of the Top 100 Revolutionary Garden Centers in America by *Today's Garden Center* magazine.

A COMMITMENT TO THE COMMUNITY

Another factor contributing to Homestead's success is its longstanding commitment to giving back to the community and the green industry.

Over the years, Homestead has served as a host site of many black tie and char-

For the last three years, Homestead has been one of the host sites for plant breeders and growers from around the world during Fashion in Bloom, a fall event that gives industry leaders the opportunity to showcase new plant introductions. Riddle played a major role in conceptualizing and developing the event, which is coordinated by the GCA.

Some of Riddle's proudest achievements, however, relate to the role Homestead plays providing and maintaining plants in the greater-Annapolis area. "We have had a significant impact on the community to make it more horticulture friendly," says Riddle. For example, Homestead supplies plants for Camden Yards—home stadium of the Baltimore Orioles baseball team—which is now well known for its floral displays.

Another significant contribution is through Homestead's corporate partnership with the AHS. As part of the relationship, Homestead supplies the AHS with plants for the grounds at the Society's headquarters at River Farm and poinsettias for its indoor holiday display. "Homestead Gardens has been an invaluable partner, helping to make River Farm a showplace for the best of American horticulture," says **Tom Underwood**, director of member programs and COO for the AHS. "We are fortunate to benefit from Don Riddle's strong commitment to excellence in horticulture."

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Courtney Capstack is an editorial intern for The American Gardener.



Homestead Gardens includes two 100-acre farms with greenhouses for plant production.

itable events for non-profit organizations. Homestead also participates directly in many other charitable ventures, including Habitat for Humanity.

On a personal level, Riddle has a strong commitment to the green industry and has stepped forward in a leadership role on a national level. In addition to being the first vice chairman on the American Horticultural Society (AHS) Board of Directors, Riddle is currently president of the GCA, and has served on the board of America in Bloom.