Spring in full bloom at flower fest

By Amy Clarke
STAFF WRITER
arclarke@greenvillenews.com

Whether you're in search of bright blooms to decorate your yard or vegetables to start your garden, chances are you'll find it – and much more – at the 12th annual Piedmont Plant and Flower Festival.

More than 30 vendors will set up temporary shop at the Greenville State Farmers' Market Thursday to Sunday to offer everything from perennials and annuals to trees and shrubs, herbs and vegetable plants, flowerpots and garden accessories.

Browse through Japanese maples and hibiscus, black-eyed Susans and ferns, daylilies and lantana and tomatoes and more to find the perfect addition to your yard, deck, porch, window box or garden.

"Everything from garden plants to everything you can make from a small herb garden to a larger outdoor masterpiece, you can find it," said Stephen Hudson, spokesman for the state Department of Agriculture, which hosts the plant and flower festivals around the state every year.

And much of it is locally grown.

Teri Minor, owner of Rabbit Run Farms in Landrum, said shopping with a local grower takes some

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TIPS

Master Gardener Gene Funderburk recommends some basic considerations when selecting plants.

- Complete a soil analysis (sample bags and instructions will be available at the festival). "That's the first thing we recommend," Funderburk said.
- Consider the available space for new plants, taking into account growth over the years.
- Consider plant habitat: soil moisture, sun exposure, etc.
- Don't overdo it. "We recommend people not bite off more than they can chew," Funderburk said. "Take things in small steps."

YOU CAN GO

- What: Piedmont Plant and Flower Festival
- When: 8 a.m.-6 p.m. Thursday-Saturday, 10 a.m. -4 p.m. Sunday
- Where: Greenville State Farmers' Market, 1354 Rutherford Road
- How much: Parking and admission are free

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of the guesswork out of choosing and growing spring plants.

"We know they grow in our area, and we know they're hardy," she said. "If it doesn't grow for us, we don't sell it.

"The health of our plants are much better because we take care of them," she said. "You get a better quality."

Because of the array of vendors at the festival, Minor said it's one-stop shopping where visitors may discover hard-to-find treasures, like her allium globemaster, featuring an 8-inch purple blossom.

An "Ask a Master Gardener" booth will also provide resources for home gardeners of every ilk, offering guidance about plant care, plant selection, landdesign and more.

"We answer questions for apartment dwellers to farm owners," said Master Gardener Gene Funderburk.

"We come prepared to answer as many questions as people will have.

"The flower festival is the most concentrated source of plant material that people will have in this early spring," he said, "and they're really missing a lot if they don't come out and just see what's there."

And much of it comes at a good deal.

"People realize and expect the good prices and the variety," said festival coordinator Ardona Summerall.

"This is a big kickoff for the spring season."

The Piedmont Plant and Flower Festival will be open 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Thursday to Saturday and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday. Admission is free.



Staff file

Roses were in bloom at last year's Piedmont Plant and Flower Festival at the Greenville State Farmer's Market.