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For Immediate Release

Fernlea Introduces New Winter Garden Collection™ Cold-Hardy Plants Extend the Season Once Again

Fernlea's new Winter Garden Collection gives gardeners hardy plants to celebrate the season of snow, and extends the gardening season well into winter. The new hardy plants will be available in garden centers starting September 2004.

The cold-loving collection is comprised of several varieties of heather (calluna), and a selection of miniature conifers. Intended primarily for container gardening, the plants work well in combination with other hardy plants such as Icicle Pansies, ornamental kale, and mums. The idea is that gardeners convert their traditional summer-planted containers into hardy ones that will continue to look beautiful into, and even through the winter months.

Winter gardening is new to most in North America, but in parts of Europe such as Britain and Germany, plants such as heather have become very popular for window boxes and other all-season containers. And why not? As long as your container can withstand the weather, these hardy plants from Fernlea will.

Fernlea is not new to cold-season gardening. They introduced hugely popular Icicle Pansies in 2000 – now the best-selling winter pansy. It only made sense that the company sought new ways to extend the season even farther than before.

“Many gardeners think of winter gardening as trimming back perennials and mulching over roses. We're putting life back into the term winter gardening with living, green, and even blooming plants that like the cold. The plants are ideal to dress up entrances and window boxes through the winter season”, says Jeff Howe, President, Fernlea Flowers.

Creative combinations yield infinitely beautiful and unique containers with this collection. For example, pink blooming heather plants with a low growing juniper like 'Blue Chip' and a taller cedar variety like 'Berkmans Gold' can be combined with clear purple Icicle pansies for a stunning effect. The company lists planting recipe combinations on their web site at www.fernlea.com.

Heather has a shrub-like or evergreen appearance, some varieties with flowers in shades of pink, lavender or white. Foliage varies from deep blue green, to yellowy green, and yet others turn to shades of burgundy. The selection of conifers includes miniature cedars, false cypress and junipers. As container plants, these should be treated as annuals. Additional care tips are published on the Fernlea web site.

Test gardeners tried out the Winter Garden Collection last season. In addition to trying the beautiful plants, this special preview group developed their own planting ideas. This included things like adding decorative holiday ribbon wrapped around the container, glittered curly branches in the center of an urn, twinkle lights, and lit candles in between the containers along walkways.

One tester, Kim M comments, "I had so many compliments on my 'winter garden'. I got oohs and aahs from guests as they came in my front door admiring my containers. My window box of heather and junipers had twinkle lights on it making it especially nice with snow cover at night."

Many test gardeners also tried the plants in traditional garden beds. In very snowy areas, they did not get the benefit of seeing the plants all winter, but most plants survived the winter in more protective in-ground gardens. This offers an alternate use for the Winter Garden collection. "I planted a bed with heather and miniature cedars alongside my Icicle Pansies. I had a gorgeous garden until the snow blanketed it, then again in April, says tester Danielle F.

However gardeners choose to use this cold-loving collection, it is expected that they will concur on one thing – that the Winter Garden Collection makes winter gardening a new favorite hobby.

Plants will be sold through independent and big box retailers beginning September 2004. Interested gardeners can sign up online to be notified when fresh plants are delivered to stores near them. Also on the web site are planting recipes, photos, tips and care information at www.fernlea.com.

Fernlea Flowers is one of North America's largest growers with greenhouses in the US and Canada. A family-owned and operated business, Fernlea has most recently focused on growing and marketing unique products that provide gardeners with consistent quality and garden performance benefits. More information about Fernlea is available at their web site, www.fernlea.com.

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