2004 Holiday Show at the Conservatory

For many years the conservatory has been decorated with poinsettias between Thanksgiving and the end of Jan. However, few people would come to enjoy the beauty of the conservatory during the holidays. Most likely because it is the end of the school semester and everyone is headed home or some place other than Champaign-Urbana for the semester break.

This year the conservatory was open the second weekend of December so the public could see the conservatory with all the poinsettias on display. There were between 50-60 poinsettias planted in the conservatory. They were all the standard colors of red, white, and pink. With close to a hundred varieties of poinsettias, we wanted to keep things simple in the conservatory.

To make the event even more interesting, on Sunday there was featured a ‘Taste of the Tropics’. There are many edible plants in the conservatory and collections. Foods using the fruits, herbs and spices representing plants grown in the collections were available for a tasteful treat on Sunday.

Spring 2005 - Blue Poppy Show

Once again the conservatory will welcome Spring with a flush of Himalayan Blue Poppies (Meconopsis ‘Lingholm’). The Himalayan blue poppy is a gardener’s fantasy. Very few garden flowers equal the beauty of the blue poppy. What makes the flower a gardener’s fantasy is that it can only be grown in very specific parts of the world. So, for most of us in Central Illinois, Illinois or even most of the United States, it remains the elusive dream of most gardeners. Only the lucky gardeners of Alaska or the Northwest Pacific, where the temperatures are cool and there is plenty of moisture, are fortunate enough to grow these poppies in their gardens.

Due to the restrictive growing conditions of the poppies, they cannot be grown here from seed to maturity. We buy mature roots from a nursery in Alaska. They are shipped dormant. Therefore, when we receive them, they are potted up immediately and put into a cooler set at freezing. After so many weeks in the cooler, the poppies are grown in the greenhouse where we can control the temperatures to emulate those of their native Himalayans. Due to the warm winters we have been experiencing and the limitations of our greenhouse controls, this will be the last year the poppies will be shown here for at least a few years.

For a list of more upcoming events, go to http://www.life.uiuc.edu/plantbio/greenhouse