

Laura – please send this release on or before June 5 to the Ottawa press list.

For immediate release.

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America in Bloom Judges Visit Ottawa, IL

Judges from the America in Bloom (AIB) national awards program will visit Ottawa, IL on June 20 and 21. This is Ottawa's first entry in the America in Bloom national awards program. The town is one of 28 towns across America working on local revitalization programs with the hopes of receiving a prestigious America in Bloom national award.

Ottawa is competing against Madisonville, KY and Calabasas, CA in the 12,001 to 25,000 population category.

Judges are Bill Hahn and Bruce Riggs, two of America in Bloom's most experienced judges.



Bill Hahn



Bruce Riggs

Bill Hahn has served the city of Akron, Ohio for 34 years in various capacities. Since 1993 his title has been City Arborist and Horticulturist. Bill has received several citations for his work including Akron's winning the 2003 America in Bloom national competition for the 101,000-300,000 population category, Neptune Park Historic Restoration, and the Akron Noise Attenuation Project being featured by Scenic America as an "Environmental Solution" to highway noise.

Bill has been a registered Landscape Architect since 1984, and earned an Associates Degree in Ornamental Horticulture from Ohio State University in 1974. He is an environmental enthusiast, is well traveled, visiting many of the national, state and provincial parks, gardens, arboreta and nursery growers. He is member of ONLA, ISA, and Scenic America, serves on the Contest Committee of America in Bloom.

Hahn said, "Some of the other burbs of Chicago have done so well in past competitions. The anticipation to return to the region is building my excitement."

Bruce Riggs currently free-lances in horticulture and is involved in several not for profit institutions. He is also very involved in the family landscape design business with his wife Melanie Menachem Riggs who is also an AIB judge. They reside in New Rochelle, New York. He recently held the position of Curator of Science at the Bruce Museum (no relation!) of Arts & Science in Greenwich, CT.

During his 18 years at the New York Botanical Garden, Bruce was very involved with the Horticulture and Education Divisions. He administered the creation and implementation of the internationally recognized interpretation program for the NYBG. He has recently been very involved in elementary school science

and horticulture programs. He has worked on projects for the American Association of Museums and the Institute of Museum Studies. He has been very involved with Mountain Top Arboretum in Tannersville, NY, serving as President since 1998. Bruce is an avid traveler having visited numerous gardens and natural areas.

Riggs commented, "Reviewing the 'Ottawa is Blooming' website has really peaked my interest for our judging tour. I am intrigued that Ottawa is attempting a 'Botanical Arts' brand to attract tourism."

Participants have opportunities to receive recognition in the following areas:

- Bloom rating
- Population category winner
- Outstanding achievement award – the "best of the best" over all participants in each of the six evaluated criteria
- Special mention – for what the judges deem to be an extraordinary project or program.
- Population category winners are invited to participate in international competition via the Communities in Bloom program in Canada.
- Community Champion
- YouTube Video

To date, more than 200 towns and cities from 41 states have participated in the program and more than 20 million people have been touched by it. Awards will be announced on September 21, 2013 at AIB's National Symposium and Awards, held this year in Orlando, FL.

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America in Bloom is a non-profit 501c3 corporation whose mission is to promote nationwide beautification through education and community involvement by encouraging the use of flowers, plants, trees, and other environmental and lifestyle enhancements.