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Spring flowers

It's time for Sacramento camellia contest, but how many entries?

BY DEBBIE ARRINGTON



PHOTO BY DEBBIE ARRINGTON

water; cut flowers appreciate a drink before their turn in the spotlight.

After judging, the show will be open to the public from 3 to 6 p.m. Saturday and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday. Among the highlights will be a salute to Nuccio's Nurseries, California's legendary camellia hybridizer and grower. Dozens of bushes from Nuccio's will be offered for sale.

Who knows? You may have a blue ribbon or trophy to take home, too.

BUSY MARCH

This month, local gardening hits another gear as we head into spring. (Tomato planting time is right around the corner!)

Looking for inspiration? There's plenty to be found this weekend.

Learn practical tips and a lot more during Green Acres' eighth annual Dig Into Spring Ideas Fair on Saturday. From 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., the Folsom nursery (205 Serpa Way) will host garden talks, demonstrations, raffles and more to get gardeners ready for the busy season ahead. Admission is free.

Among the featured workshops will be Urban Farmstead's Kyle Hagerty; at 1 p.m., he'll share his secrets to success for "Edible Gardening: How to Grow a Bumper Crop This Year."

Details: idiggreenacres.com.

Meanwhile, at Cal Expo, the 39th annual Original Sacramento Home and Garden Show rolls out the latest trends and products in one giant marketplace. Friday through Sunday, find hundreds of vendors and exhibits showcasing everything from air conditioning to window replacements. A big emphasis will be on "green" products that are kind to the planet—and can save money, energy and water, too.

Show hours are noon to 6 p.m. Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday. Details: sachomeandgardenshow.com. □

After an unusually warm February, Julie Vierra is understandably nervous. Will Sacramento's famous camellias still be in bloom this weekend?

"With this hot weather, bushes are popping them out so fast, it's scary," she said. "Thank goodness, we're cooling down at night—but not enough."

Vierra is co-chairman for the 96th annual Sacramento Camellia Show, traditionally the nation's largest celebration of this popular flower.

"Our 'largest camellia show' may not be so large this year," said Vierra, who saw her own camellias open way too early. "My garden was in full bloom [two weeks before the show]; a good third are already done."

Set for Saturday and Sunday, the camellia show will be held for the second time at the Elks Lodge, 6446 Riverside Blvd. Entries will be accepted from 7 to 10:30 a.m. Saturday; beginners should make sure to get there before 9 a.m.

"We need to tell everybody, 'Bring all your camellias! Bring in your flowers!'" Vierra said. "Somebody must have some camellias left."

Even if you've never entered a flower show before, this may be the time to try. Camellias should be home grown (no fair raiding local parks or businesses). Members of the Camellia Society of Sacramento will help first-time exhibitors with set up and placement. They'll help with identification of camellia varieties, too.

The key is to cut the camellia with about 4 to 6 inches of stem. (It will be trimmed down for display). Keep a couple of leaves on the stem, too. Carry the camellias to the show with their stems in

Debbie Arrington, an award-winning garden writer and lifelong gardener, is co-creator of the Sacramento Digs Gardening blog and website.