

Bob Bosma

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Springtime on his

mind

By Bill Hunt

The Intelligencer

Every spring the flower beds in Belleville's public parks burst to life seemingly overnight.

But nature's spring bounty is actually the result of the year-round work by the city's certified horticulturalist, Bob Bosma of the parks and recreation department.

Each year Bosma, 59, plants close to 100,000 flowers in the city's 28 locations. The smallest flower bed has about 20 plants and the largest — the Canadian flag on the hill overlooking Highway 401 — has approximately 13,500.

There are three greenhouses under Bosma's care on North Park Street. They are the equivalent of his office, where he works from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Inside, he grows about 90,000 plants from seed. Slips from existing plants supply some of the others and Bosma purchases 7,000 mums each fall from the Garden Club and 1,000 ivy geraniums to hang from light posts downtown.

Two of the three greenhouses remain empty until March 1 when there are too many plants to keep in one house. By mid-March the second greenhouse is being used.

"You've got to do the sewing and watering and clipping and transplanting," he points out. "(Then) you've got to transplant the whole blooming works too," he adds with an unintended pun. "Once you sew 'em, that's just the start of it."

At a glance, Bosma appears an unlikely candidate for nurturing

such fragile life. He is tall, with a slightly weathered look about him. But he says he takes satisfaction "from seeing a beautiful flower bed" and likes the bright colors most.

But there isn't a lot of color in the greenhouse in February. A quick tour reveals fuschia plants brought inside for the winter, lantanas — "some are more than 10 years old" — carpet bedding plants, oleanders and various seedlings.

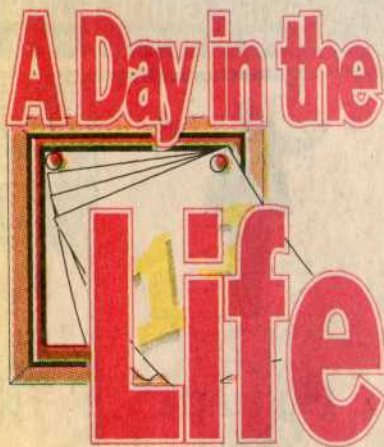
The carpet bedding plants are used for such things as forming service club names or emblems in them, says Bosma.

Such displays were a factor in Belleville's winning the Communities in Bloom competition last year for its population category (20,001 to 50,000). The event, sponsored by Parks Canada and various corporate sponsors, is intended to challenge communities to improve their visual appeal.

Judges visit municipalities in August and look at public, residential and industrial flower displays and landscaping, plus the general tidiness, environmental awareness and level of community involvement. As a result of winning in Ontario last year, the city advances to the national level this year and is competing against West Vancouver, B.C., St. Albert, Alta., Brandon, Man., St. Bruno-Montarville, Que. and Mount

Pearl, Nfld.

Bosma, 59, has been growing flowers since 1957 when he started at the Weese greenhouse in Prince Edward County, where Dekker's is today. He's been with the parks department since 1974.



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