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For Immediate Release

Growing with A Passion for Plants

It's a dirty business at times, but only the kind that gets under your fingernails. Fernlea Flowers has sustained their passion for flowers, plants, and all the dirt that goes with them since 1939.

Based in the heart of an agricultural belt in Delhi, Ontario, Canada, this family-owned business has made a name for itself in recent years with the introduction of its exclusive Icicle® Pansies. But the blueprint for Icicle® Pansies came from a kind of company mantra: search the world for great plants to bring home.

Owners Virginia and Joe Howe have been doing exactly that for years. Whether it's the English countryside, or the mountains of Italy, they cruise the world with a keen sense akin to a designer searching for fabrics, or an art enthusiast hunting for rare works. Many years ago, several journeys inspired them to bring a 'winter pansy' to the Northern US and Canada.

In contrast to art and fabric however, Fernlea's take-aways are mere inspirations. They require science, innovation and production techniques back home to become the plants that appear in garden centers some years later. It's a comprehensive process that picks up with their staff of horticulturists and growers – a group of people who employ the latest production technologies, in combination with a pure love for gardening.

Their operations include several greenhouses in Ontario and Florida providing for good distribution throughout their market area, which helps ensure the freshest plants at time of purchase. These strategic locations allow Fernlea to leverage natural climate conditions to bring high quality plants to market throughout the year. Cold-loving pansies can be summer-grown outside in Canada, while accent foliage plants grow full and lush in the early spring Florida sunshine.

Fernlea's passion for gardening also translates into products that provide success and pleasure for gardeners of all abilities. Recently, the company announced a collection of shade-loving perennial ferns, called Fabulous Ferns™. Largely overlooked in recent years, ferns are one of the oldest known plants on earth with wonderful habits and textures that today's gardeners are looking for. Ideal to fill in areas where many other plants could never grow, these hardy ferns are sure to amaze their owners.

Texture, shape and color interest are also available from Fernlea's Gorgeous Grasses™. This line of ornamental grasses includes hardy varieties, grasses that change color over their growing season, and a dwarf version ideal for container plantings.

The common thread for Fernlea is based on the uncommon. Once happy to plant flats upon flats of impatiens or begonias, more gardeners now want to experience the new, the different, and wherever possible, plants growing where there were none before. Whether that's a cold December day with vibrant Icicle® Pansies, a mid-winter snowfall on Feather Reed grass, or a hot July afternoon under the maples with graceful Cinnamon ferns, a gardener can find something new to love from Fernlea.

Beyond the plants themselves, Fernlea recognizes the need to de-mystify gardening for self-declared brown thumbs. The company's approach is to prevent terminology or Latin names from getting in the way of enjoying the hobby and the results. Their comprehensive website provides information for the novice to the more experienced gardener, and includes a free Fernlea Garden Club electronic newsletter service with tips and ideas year round. Gardeners can even sign up to an online service which provides email notification of 'just arrived' plant deliveries to local garden centers.

Although Fernlea is one of the largest growers in North America, their hands-on approach is evident in daily life. Family members peruse plants in the greenhouses, like chefs over simmering sauces. Company President Jeff Howe says, "I guess it's in the blood. I'm always thinking about the next trip to Europe, or the best way to adapt a new product to growing conditions here. I still get excited when I find something unique while abroad and I start writing up a growing plan on the airplane home. I always run into people who want to share their passion about gardening and it's continuously gratifying to be part of this industry".

Fernlea Flowers grows a number of branded products now, including Icicle® Pansies, Awesome Accents™, Fabulous Ferns™ and Gorgeous Grasses™. They distribute their plants through large retailers and independent garden centers throughout the Eastern and Midwest US as well as in Ontario and Eastern Canada. More information about their plants and their company can be found online at www.fernlea.com.

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