

# Clinton Nurseries of Florida, *Gadsden County*



The innovation displayed by Kay Phelps has been through mass-production of an elite magnolia for the ornamental landscape markets. After years of breeding and extensive trials, in 2007 Tesselaar Plants was ready to make a new michelia hybrid available to the United States market and Clinton Nurseries of Florida in Havana was asked if they would be willing to serve as the nursery to handle the initial production of Fairy Magnolias® BLUSH, a Michelia hybrid bred with beautiful lightly fragrant flowers blushed lilac pink and evergreen dark green foliage. Kay has been growing the unique magnolia since. An avid plant propagator, Kay has had several challenges growing the compact bushy plant in hot/humid greenhouses and outdoor conditions, controlling container pot moisture levels, and pruning the plant canopy just right. "I was very excited about this stunning, new, soon-to-be-released plant", says Kay. "I felt it would be a great hit and was very glad to have been selected to handle the production management". Using a combination of plant propagation, best management and IPM practices, Clinton Nursery through Kay's efforts now provide Fairy Magnolia BLUSH



to other licensed Tesselaar growers who service garden centers in Zones 7 - 11.

## Improving Agriculture through Extension Involvement

Locally, Kay has provided leadership, first as a member and then as Chairwomen of the Gadsden County Extension Overall Advisory and the Plant Science Advisory-Committees. Her experience in various aspects of the nursery industry and management of the 140 acre nursery in Havana has provided Gadsden County Extension with great insights into nursery production, community development issues and needs that could be addressed by Extension programming. Kay is an innovator and early adapter of industry and Extension efforts and technology as evidenced by early participation in Florida's BMP for Nurseries. Kay, along with the management and staff of Clinton Nurseries, has collaborated with State Specialist in hosting extension education programs on nutrient management, Master Gardener Volunteer visits, and has assisted college students in conducting research activities at the nursery.

## Impacting Agriculture in the Northwest District

For the past 19 years, Kay has been the production manager at Clinton Nurseries of Florida. Clinton Nurseries of Florida, in Havana, FL, is a regional wholesale grower of perennial and ornamental nursery stock. Kay is a member of the Board of Directors for the Center for Applied Nursery Research, a non-profit organization. The organization provides funding and facilities for research

in an operational nursery setting that focuses on nursery production practices and plant breeding for the nursery trade in the southeastern United States. Kay is currently a member of the American Society of Horticultural Science/Certified Horticulturist Board. She is a Past President (2006-07) of the international Plant Propagator's Society (IPPS)/Southern Region and served as a Site Committee Leader for the 2011 IPPS/Southern Regional Annual Meeting. The Annual Meeting was held in Valdosta, GA and included area nursery tours in Jefferson, Gadsden and Leon Counties. ■

### Kay Phelps *Havana, Florida*

