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America in Bloom Judges to Visit Ottawa, IL

Judges from the America in Bloom (AIB) national awards program will visit Ottawa on July 21 and 22. This is Ottawa's third entry in the America in Bloom national awards program. The town is one of 42 towns across America working on local revitalization programs with the hopes of receiving a prestigious America in Bloom national award.

Ottawa is competing against Fairhope, AL; Fairview Park, OH; and Madisonville, KY in the 16,000 – 20,000 population category.

All participants are evaluated in the following areas: overall impression, heritage preservation, environmental efforts, urban forestry, landscapes, floral displays, and community involvement. The judges evaluate these criteria in the residential, commercial, and municipal sectors.

Judges are Evelyn Alemanni and Stephen Pategas.



Evelyn Alemanni



Stephen Pategas

Evelyn Alemanni is a self-employed writer and award winning gardener from Elfin Forest, California. She has judged for the America in Bloom program since 2003 and also serves as an international judge for the Canadian Communities in Bloom program and for the international LivCom Awards; experiences which Evelyn says has given her the opportunity to share wonderful ideas and inspirations with communities in many countries, and to build networks of people committed to improving their hometowns. She has judged more than 130 towns in nine countries.

Evelyn serves on the AIB board of directors and chairs its external relations committee. She is the creator/author/designer of the *Ten Years of Best Ideas* book and donated the rights to the book to AIB. In 2014, she has released her four-volume book series, *Fleurs du Jour* which features bouquets made every day with flowers from her garden and three special volumes, *Caladiums*, *Roses*, and *Bouquets from the Bulb Garden*.

In 2001, *Good Morning America* named Evelyn's garden one of the five best in the U.S. *San Diego Home/Garden Lifestyles* has twice named it one of its gardens of the year. *Garden Ideas and Outdoor Living* featured it on its cover. It has also been in *Garden Shed*; *Better Homes and Gardens*; *Gardens, Decks and Landscapes* and many other garden-related magazines.

Stephen Pategas is an award winning landscape architect, garden writer, garden photographer and plant geek in Winter Park, FL. He and his wife Kristin are owners of Hortus Oasis, a boutique landscape architecture company and authors of the book *Southern Coastal Home Landscaping* and gardening columns for local magazines.

Their historic 1925 home and garden have been featured on numerous garden tours, in magazines and on television including *Growing a Greener World* hosted by Joe Lamp'l.

Stephen currently serves on the City of Winter Park's Keep Winter Park Beautiful & Sustainable Board and with it founded Winter Park Blooms. Winter Park successfully competed in AIB in 2013. Previously he served on the Tree Preservation Board and the Parks and Recreation Board. After designing the gardens for Casa Feliz, a 1933 historic brick house that was saved from demolition and moved in 2000, Stephen joined the Friends of Casa Feliz board. His travels have taken him to hundreds of gardens in North America, Europe and Southeast Asia. Stephen's favorite gardens to design are those that touch people's lives.

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.
- Special awards
- Population category winners are invited to participate in international competition via the Communities in Bloom program in Canada.
- Community Champion
- YouTube Video Award

To date, more than 240 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 26 at AIB's National Symposium and Awards, held this year in Holland, MI.

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America in Bloom is an independent non-profit 501c3 corporation. America in Bloom envisions communities across the country as welcoming and vibrant places to live, work, and play – benefiting from colorful plants and trees; enjoying clean environments; celebrating heritage; and planting pride through volunteerism.

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