

## **OUR FUNCTION AND TRADITION**

Since 1908, the City of Sandusky has operated a greenhouse for the purpose of growing plants to beautify our city. This bit of history is important when considering the positive impact the greenhouse and its staff has had on the development and reputation of our city. It has been our long-standing mission to provide excellence and creativity in the form of horticultural displays throughout our parks.

As the State of Ohio's most popular tourist destination, our parks have been appreciated by millions of people each year for over a century. While it would be difficult to quantify the economic impact of this tradition, our parks have always drawn people downtown. Annual events such as the *Holiday Lighting Ceremony*, the *Fourth of July Celebration*, the *Gazebo Concert Series*, *Cruisin' By the Bay* and *Party at the Plaza* attract thousands. As an economic development tool, our meticulously maintained floral parks have contributed to the decision of a developer to commit millions of private dollars to redevelop abandoned factories into the "Paper District" commercial and residential development. Along with a spectacular view of Sandusky Bay, anyone considering the purchase of a condominium in the Paper District would certainly consider the quality of the city parks in the immediate area an important asset.

Washington Park is considered by many as the jewel of the city's parks. Washington Park continues the century-old tradition of utilizing tropical plants mixed with colorful annuals for a stunning visual effect. Our commemorative floral mounds located in each of the park's quadrants have been a focal point and a source of community pride. New in 2005, one side of a mound will be designated a "Celebration Mound" that will be sold on a weekly basis to commemorate an individual's special date such as a wedding or anniversary. To plant these mounds, the greenhouse staff propagates over 65,000 foliage plants during the fall and winter months. To purchase these uncommon plants from outside sources would cost over \$30,000 annually.

The full-time greenhouse staff of four propagates well over 100,000 plants that are used throughout the city's parks and facilities. We supply plants for Oakland Cemetery, Washington Park, Veteran's Park, Dauch Park, Facer Park, Shoreline Park, East Park, Epple's Corner, Schade-Mylander Plaza, the Rose Garden, the Butler Street landscape mound, Mills Creek Golf Course and for the planters and hanging baskets along Columbus Avenue downtown. Since we propagate plants from cuttings and from seed, we can supply plants at a fraction of the cost of "finished" plants from outside sources. Purchasing finished plants of similar size, quantity and variety from commercial greenhouses could easily be in the \$100,000-\$150,000 range each year. Even when factoring in labor and greenhouse operation expenses, we still offer sound value. The function of the greenhouse staff goes far beyond the propagation of plants.

City employees are responsible for the planting design, installation, and subsequent care of the plants we grow. We also maintain the shrubs, small trees and topiary throughout the parks. The City Greenhouse also offers the public a reasonably-priced plant rental program. Palms and ferns are rented to individuals for special occasions like weddings and banquets.

The value of the greenhouse staff extends further into non-horticultural areas as well. Staff maintains four large fountains as well as irrigation systems that have over sixty zones with hundreds of sprinkler heads. Our staff is also charged with the installation and upkeep of our elaborate holiday displays including over 30,000 mini-lights and dozens of large displays.

The success of the City Greenhouse and Park Department is well documented. Over the last century, Sandusky's parks have been referenced in glowing terms through dozens of newspaper articles (regional and local), reader's forum letters, trade magazines, television programs, and most recently by winning the nationwide "America in Bloom" contest. The greenhouse staff continues to provide excellent parks in order to attract tourists, ensure repeat visits, attract private developers, and maintain the standards our citizens expect.