

News of Chatham

News & Features

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Phil Dark seeks plant patent...

Nurseryman creates new hybrid

By Angela Delp

Phil Dark, owner of Oakmont Nursery, has created a hybrid gardenia. He is trying to get a plant patent on his creation, the "Crown Jewel."

The "Crown Jewel" was created by cross pollinating two 'parent plants, a "Chuck Hayes" gardenia with a "Kleims Hardy" gardenia.

Dark said he got the idea after

attending a seminar at North Carolina State University's Arboretum in 1998. Dr. Michael Dirr was the speaker.

"I came home from the seminar really excited and ready to create a hybrid plant myself," he said.

Dark began by studying two hybrid plants he had at the nursery. He compared their color, leaf shape and blossom.

He learned that while gardenias produce more blooms in the sun, they do just as well if placed in the shade in the afternoon.

"You have to get to know ins and outs," he said. "Gardenias are not finicky plants.

"Make sure they can drain water well and don't plant them in a wet spot."

He added that the plants are

both "drought and deer tolerant."

"It's been a good growth season for gardenias, though the freeze in April damaged the plants," he said.

Dark said gardenias are typically sensitive to cold temperatures.

"I wanted to make a cold-hardy plant," he said. "I ended

up getting the best features of both the parent plants."

He explained that one of the parent plants was low growing and one produced daisy-like blooms.

"The "Crown Jewel" is cold hardy, low growing and double flowered," he said.

In 2000, he began showing his creation to botanists and horticulturists, including Dr. Dirr.

"People who saw the plant felt it had a future," he said. "Since most plants coming onto the market are patented, I was urged to apply."

He added that the patent process is lengthy.

"I started breeding the crown jewel almost 10 years ago and am just now getting the patent," he said. "I plan to also get an international patent but that process could take up to



Angela Delp photo

Oakmont Nursery owner develops hybrid flower...

Phil Dark, owner of a Chatham County nursery, poses with one of his prize gardenias and his German Shepard Mindy. He began working to develop his hybrid "Crown Jewel" gardenia in 1998 and applied for a patent on the plant this summer.