



GINGER PERRY/The Winchester Star

Chad Tyson of Winchester and his 3-year-old son Ayden walk through Nalls Farm Market's display of pumpkins and mums at ArborFest at the State Arboretum of Virginia at Blandly Experimental Farm in Clarke County.

ArborFest shows off fall, State Arboretum of Va.

By JOEL DANON
The Winchester Star

BOYCE — Sara Wilder used Sharpie markers to color two blue eyes and red lipstick to create the facial features for her scarecrow Saturday.

The 7-year-old from Delaplane moved down the scarecrow-making assembly line, where her mother Jasmine helped stuff straw into a child-size pair of jeans and pink-striped turtle-neck shirt.

"I want her to look pretty with a smile," Sara said. "Pink is my favorite color, so I think she looks pretty."

Her brother, 9-year-old Jeremy, took a different approach making his scarecrow — just one of the many children's activities at the 18th annual ArborFest at the State Arboretum of Virginia at Blandly Experimental Farm in Clarke County.

"I made him really scary to keep the bad things away," Jeremy said.

In addition to several children's and family activities at the fall festival, a flurry of vendors and exhibits were geared toward the love of gardening, landscape and autumn.



Michael Szesze, owner of Carnivorous Plant Nursery in Derwood, Md., talks about pitcher plants and their ability to eat bugs, including the pesky brown marmorated stinkbug. He was one of the vendors at the two-day ArborFest.

Koy Mislowsky, events and volunteer coordinator at Blandly, said the weekend event typically attracts the "serious" gardener on Saturday and more families on Sunday.

One of the more unique vendors was Teresa Bennett, owner of Gardens and Accessories by Teresa. Based in Yorktown, Bennett was selling wire art topiaries.

She first begins with the wire frame of an animal — for example a horse, turtle, alligator or specific dog breed — and fills it with dried moss. Plants are then embedded in the moss to serve as a feature of that specific animal — such as grass growing to represent the tail of a horse.

"My trick is finding the plant that complements the frame or the form," she said. "The plants

are all perennials, a lot of them are evergreen, so they will continue to stay green during the winter and they will flush back out in the spring."

Janet Hitchen bought a rabbit-shaped form for the garden on her farm in Millwood.

"I think it's adorable," she said. "At my house, I have a big cow and then I have a couple of dogs like this one, so I'm going to put the rabbit with them."

For Janice Carlston of Winchester, ArborFest was a great opportunity to learn what plants best suit her small backyard garden.

"It's great being around so many knowledgeable people who can teach you so much," she said.

Carlston even had a chance to stop at the booth of the Virginia Lovers' Gourd Society and make a gourd necklace with her granddaughter Lizzy.

Mislowsky said more than 140 volunteers help with the festival. She relies both on arboretum volunteers and students from local high schools, including James Wood and Millbrook, and members of the Clarke County FFA.

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