

Ja will take centre stage at next year's Flower Mart

Jamaica will take centre stage at next year's Flower Mart, Washington D.C.'s premier annual festival of flowers, music, and entertainment.

The two-day signature event brings thousands of horticulture experts, exhibitors, and aficionados to the historic Washington National Cathedral in the United States capital.

The announcement of Jamaica's selection was made on Tuesday, November 1 in Washington, D.C., by Vickie Longosz, Chairman of the 2012 Flower Mart. The occasion was the annual general meeting of All Hallows Guild, organizers of the festival. All Hallows Guild serves as stewards of the gardens and grounds of the iconic Washington National Cathedral.

The annual festival, which turns 73 next year, will run from May 4-5 and its spotlight on Jamaica makes it the first Caribbean nation to be so selected.

In making the announcement, Ms. Longosz said, "I am happy to announce that the country of Jamaica will be the star of the two-day festival of flowers, music and entertainment in Washington, D.C." She said that because Jamaica will celebrate its 50th year of independence next year, the flower show organizers have decided it would be fitting to pay tribute to that outstanding country and its people.

The 2012 Flower Mart chairman indicated that plans are in high gear to spotlight the culture of this outstanding Caribbean island that will showcase its flora, music, art, dance and song. She said that Washington, D.C., anxiously waits what Jamaica has to offer.

Ms. Longosz said that Flower Mart 2012 is proud and happy that Jamaica's Ambassador to the United States, Her Excellency Audrey P. Marks, will serve as honorary chair of the 2012 flower show and has graciously agreed to join in the festivities with assistance from the Embassy of Jamaica.

Custos of St. Andrew and Jamaica's renowned horticulturalist, Hon. Marigold Harding, who has represented the country at this event for the past five years, said she was delighted that Jamaica was chosen. "It has always been my desire and wish to see Jamaica selected as the featured country and it could not have happened at a more appropriate time," she said.

Mrs. Harding, who addressed this year's annual general meeting of the Guild, said that this will be a great opportunity for us to showcase our country. She said that the Diaspora would have a significant role in this event.

In commenting on Jamaica being selected, Ambassador Marks said, "For Jamaica to be the only Caribbean country selected to be featured at the 73rd staging of this important Flower show, gives us an opportunity to highlight Jamaica's creativity and to show to the rest of the world that we can be competitive in an international flower exhibition. This also allows us to have an important presence."

Ambassador Marks noted that this selection is a reflection of the significant interest that individuals around the world have in our country and in what we do. She went on to note that "we have been very successful in areas such as sports, education and music. However, using this medium will showcase another aspect of Jamaica — the flora and fauna that people have not traditionally seen."

Jamaica's Ambassador to the United States, Her Excellency Audrey P. Marks, has the rapt attention of Custos of St Andrew, Hon. Marigold Harding, who paid a courtesy call on the Ambassador at the Jamaican Embassy in Washington, D.C., on Monday, October 31, 2011. Mrs. Harding was in Washington to address the annual general meeting of the All Hallows Guild, where Jamaica's selection as the featured country for the 2012 Flower Mart.

The Ambassador pointed out that the flower show will be one of the signature events being planned by the Embassy along with the various Diaspora groups, to celebrate Jamaica's 50th anniversary of independence next year in Washington, D.C. The annual Flower Mart is a prominent fixture on the Washington DC Spring calendar and a key component of an array of events staged in the District of Columbia (DC) to attract tourists to the American capital city.