

Spring Flowers & Baskets
By Debbie and Randy Coe, 2013

Spring has officially been here for a few weeks, but here in the Pacific NW we haven't seen much sun. In fact we have had an extra amount of rain. A few days we have even seen snow and hail. We guess the old saying of April Showers bring May flowers must be true. Our trees are starting to bud out. Crocus and daffodils are giving the yards some bright colors. Here in our yard, there are periwinkle, Jacob's coat, and camellias in full bloom. With the start of flower season, there is an urge to get our Fenton baskets out and put them to work. They look so gorgeous filled with flowers to set off a colorful display on the table.

As we admire our baskets, it is also time to appreciate all the people that were part of making that particular basket. Many steps are involved and they are all important to achieve the desired pattern and shape of the basket. Have you ever seen a basket being made? Since there are many of you that haven't viewed the actual steps, we are going to share them with you.

The following steps are taken from a display Fenton did when they made a Cranberry basket. There are about 25 glass workers who compose the shop. The first step involves the caser obtaining a bud of gold ruby glass. This is heated up so it can be worked. Other glass workers will then gather crystal glass that will cover the bud. It is shaped by blocking it in soapy water and then gently blowing air into the blow pipe to expand this gob. It is then passed to the glass blower. The glassblower will stand with the mould by his feet. There is some crystal overblow that appears on the top of the piece. After this overblow is removed, the piece is then reheated and given to the finisher. He utilizes a carbon paddle to flare out the top and then the crimping device will give the top the desired type of crimp. In another area, a handle gatherer takes the right amount of hot crystal glass to make the handle. This blob is put into a mould that gives it the rib pattern. The handler then takes the ribbed section of molten glass and attaches it to each side of the basket. He marks one end with his own special mark and gives the handle the special arch. All of this happens within seconds with precise steps from all the workers working in unison.

During the 100th celebration of the Fenton Art Glass Company in 2005, Randy and I participated in the special event at the Fenton factory of making your own glass, one of which was a basket. We had a great time but will never take over those guy's jobs. After you have gone through that experience you really appreciate all the baskets that Fenton does make.

Treasure your baskets. For spring fill them with beautiful flowers to brighten your home. Enjoy!!

You can see a display of glass baskets, elegant glass of the depression era, along with displays of Early American Pressed Glass and the West Virginia Museum of American Glass at this year's Rocky Mountain Depression Glass Club's 39th Annual Show and Sale, April 27, 10:00AM - 5:00 PM and April 28, 11:00 AM - 4:00 PM. The show is held at the Douglas County Events Center in Castle Rock, CO, just off exit 181 on I-25 and Plum Creek Parkway. In addition to the displays, Debbie and Randy will give three seminars on glassware. There will be \$25 hourly door prize drawings and a special kid's drawing as well. Free glass identification and access to the RMDGS' large library will also be available. The show features 33 national dealers who will be selling American made glassware, pottery, and china from the 1800's to the 1970's. Whether you are searching for a special decorative item or pieces to complete a set, you have a great opportunity to find it at the show. Admission is \$5.00, good both day and parking is free.

