



## Martha Stewart hands out blue ribbons at a new Longhouse Reserve exhibit

BY DAWN WATSON

She inspires passionate feelings and has a devoted following of acolytes for her commitment to a never-ending variety of projects. Yet nobody does detail like Martha Stewart. The longtime gardener showed the seriousness of her intent on Saturday evening when she judged the Longhouse Reserve's "On and Off the Ground: Invitational Garden Container" exhibition. The installation, the bulk of which was exhibited in front of the Lear Memorial on the Reserve's East Hampton grounds, was created as a means of viewing container gardens as art. Walking up to the microphone to announce the winners of the competition, Ms. Stewart quipped that she had taken her job as judge very seriously. As evidence, the do-it-yourself maven then pulled out a stack of printed and indexed photos that she had taken earlier in the day of each of the 24 entries. True to her well-known attention to detail, as Ms. Stewart announced the five winners and two grand prize winners, she took special care to read the extensive components of those exhibits she deemed blue-ribbon worthy. Ms. Stewart also elicited a laugh from the gathered crowd when she remarked on her judging strategy and how she had given more prizes than the LongHouse had planned. "I gave out a lot of ribbons," she said. "Because, you know, I just love to give ribbons." The two grand prizes were awarded to Geoffrey Nimmer of East End Gardens in East Hampton and Jonathan Wright of Pennsylvania. Ms. Stewart remarked that Mr. Wright's exhibit contained some of her favorite plants, including succulents and agaves, and that his handmade pots were works of art, including an oversized grass-covered container and tropical planting that "takes the cake for its modern expression." The five first-prize winners included Frederico Azevedo of Unlimited Earth Care in Sag Harbor; Eve Suter of New York City; P. Allen Smith and his seven plant-filled containers, which came all the way from Little Rock, Arkansas; Peter Olsen of Munder-Skiles Inc. in Manhattan; and the Brooklyn Botanic Garden entry created by Uli Lorimer and his staff. Brooklyn Botanic Garden President Scot Medbury came to the event to represent his group's entry and noted that his staff made some "tactical decisions" to impress Ms. Stewart. They included plants that they knew she preferred among the wild, seed-grown entry. "We knew she loves blueberries so we made sure to include those," he said.

