

AHS 2019 Great American Gardeners National Award Winners



THE American Horticultural Society (AHS) is proud to announce the recipients of the Society's 2019 Great American Gardeners Awards. These individuals have contributed significantly to fields such as plant research, garden communication, landscape design, youth gardening, teaching, and commercial horticulture. The awards will be presented June 21 during a ceremony and banquet at River Farm, the AHS's headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia. For more information, or to register to attend the ceremony, visit www.absgardening.org/awards or call (703) 768-5700.

LIBERTY HYDE BAILEY AWARD

The American Horticultural Society's highest award, the Liberty Hyde Bailey Award is given to an individual who has made significant lifetime contributions to at least three of the following horticultural fields: teaching, research, communications, plant exploration, administration, art, business, and leadership.

Named after Liberty Hyde Bailey (1858–1954), horticulturist, educator, author. First awarded in 1958.

KAYRI HAVENS, Ph.D., is director of plant science and conservation and senior scientist at the Chicago Botanic Garden (CBG) in Glencoe, Illinois. Tasked with establishing a plant conservation department when she joined CBG in 1997, she's transformed it into an internationally recognized program that's using a broad array of techniques to preserve endangered plants and plant communities from threats such as habitat loss and climate change.



Havens is also leading an effort to get more people involved in citizen science initiatives like Budburst that help scientists track changes to plant life cycles. At the same time, she's helping mentor the next generation of plant conservation leaders by providing training each year to dozens of graduate students and hundreds of interns working in conservation and land management projects. She has published more than 75 peer-reviewed research papers and frequently travels the country giving presentations on plant conservation to audiences ranging from students to gardeners, land managers, and elected officials.

We asked her to talk about her work and why plant conservation is so important to the health of the planet.

How did you become interested in plants?

I've always been interested in plants and the natural world. As a

child, I had my own plot where I could grow whatever I wanted. My family also regularly traveled to natural areas. When I started college, I initially went into engineering, but I quickly realized that was NOT where my interests lay. I took botany as an elective and decided that was really what I wanted to do.

How did the CBG's plant conservation program come about and how has it evolved since then?

Barbara Carr, the CEO at the time I was hired in 1997, had previously been at Lincoln Park Zoo, so she recognized and valued the role botanic gardens and zoos—holders of living collections—could play in conservation. We went from curating a few rare species in the Chicago region to what's now a department of roughly 15 to 20 Ph.D.s and postdocs and about 40 graduate students at any one time. We also have hundreds of interns who work primarily on conservation and land management on public lands. We're fortunate to have been growing at a time when the garden had resources to invest in the program, and to live in a community that supports conservation.

What are some of the most significant plant conservation research projects you are involved with?

One project I'm involved with right now is attempting to improve living collections management for rare plants. The field of *ex-situ* conservation has largely focused on seed banking because most of the plants we try to preserve have seeds that can be stored for hundreds of years. But about a third of our plants can't take those conditions or don't make many seeds, so for them we have to manage living collections or cryopreserve plant parts, both of

which are labor-intensive. Here we're taking a cue from the zoo community, which has developed computer software that helps curators match animals for the best breeding prospects to maximize the amount of genetic diversity. This is still in its infancy, but has the potential to revolutionize how recalcitrant-seeded plants are maintained in botanic gardens.

Another area of research is working on seed-sourcing guidelines on various scales from backyard gardens to thousands of acres of restoration after a wildfire—what are the best seeds to use and how can we incentivize the native plant industry to grow the seeds we need for these restorations.

You have played a big part in establishing a citizen science initiative called Budburst. Tell us more about this.

Budburst is a national campaign looking at plant phenology—timing the life-cycle events of plants, such as when they bloom, when



Kayri Havens leads a Budburst workshop at Chicago Botanic Garden.

they leaf out, etc.—and how that's affected by their environment and climate change. The CBG was a partner with other groups when this started up about 10 years ago, but it transferred to us a couple of years ago. We still support open-ended campaigns asking people to track any plant, anywhere, but we're also focusing on time-bound research projects with specific communities. One of these, called Budburst Nativars, is exploring how cultivars differ from the native species they are derived from. Our study group is growing sets of taxa that include native species and cultivars to track differences in phenology and pollinator visitation.

Some of your research has focused on the effects of climate change on plant communities. What are the most serious threats climate change poses to plants?

My research focused largely on seed sourcing in an era of climate change. For decades in restoration, the motto has been that seeds adapted to local soils and climate are best. Unfortunately, our local

climates are changing, so we are assessing how this affects rules about seed sourcing. Here in Illinois, it looks like most plants will migrate north and east, so we can source our seeds from a little south and west. But when we look at migration patterns in the mountainous western U.S. there is no easy answer. At this point, using local seeds in the western U.S. appears to be the way to go.

From your perspective, what are the biggest challenges facing American plant conservation in the next decade?

Climate change, certainly, and the natural disasters—wildfires, storm surges, etc.—associated with it are the biggest. But we're seeing wave after wave of pests and insects coming into the country—things like emerald ash borer and a new disease affecting beeches. And I think you have to add plant blindness—the fact most people don't care that much about plants—to the list. Plants are simply not funded the way animal conservation is funded. People see green and think everything is fine, but that green may be an exotic species that shouldn't be here. Then there's the pollinator crisis; we see declines in a lot of the native pollinators and don't know yet what the effect will be on the native plants, but it probably won't be good.

Why is it important for home gardeners and the horticulture industry to support plant conservation?

I'd say that every environmental challenge we are facing in the U.S. and in the world—food security, climate change, invasive species, conservation, etc.—depends on plants and plant knowledge to solve them. There's an opportunity to look at green solutions to environmental problems, such as green roofs, native landscaping, pollinator gardens, and restoration. There's a lot of common ground we can find, such as investing in beautiful plants that deliver ecosystem services for pollinators.

Why is teaching important to you and what are the most important lessons you try to pass along?

Most of my teaching now involves either graduate students or the public. I love interacting with big groups of people, sharing my excitement about plants, and why they should care about them. That includes elected officials. I spend a lot of time on Capitol Hill talking to politicians about why they should care about plants. As an academic field, we can be somewhat insular and if we are not convincing elected officials and the public that what we do is important and worthy of funding—and something that their lives depend on—then I don't think we are doing our job.

What gives you the most satisfaction from your work?

Probably the best couple weeks of my year are when I'm out doing field work, because I love being with plants and plant communities. I also like the weeks where we're training 100 to 150 students to be land managers and conservationists, collecting seeds on public lands.

PAUL ECKE JR. COMMERCIAL AWARD

Given to an individual or company whose commitment to the highest standards of excellence in the field of commercial horticulture contributes to the betterment of gardening practices everywhere.

Named for Paul Ecke Jr. (1925–2002), innovator, facilitator, businessman. Formerly known as the Commercial Award, it was first awarded in 1971.

A passionate proponent of heirloom and open pollinated seeds, **Ira Wallace** is co-owner of Southern Exposure Seed Exchange (SESE), which she cooperatively manages with other members of the Acorn Community Farm in Mineral, Virginia. She has been instrumental in growing SESE into a successful supplier of more than 700 varieties that are carefully selected for superior flavor and performance in the Southeast and Mid-Atlantic.



With SESE as a successful model, Wallace advocates for democratizing the seed supply and providing broader access to healthy, flavorful food. She cofounded the annual Heritage Harvest

Festival in 2007 at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello estate in Virginia, which exposes thousands of visitors to heirloom plants and promotes their preservation. She also works on a global scale through partnerships with Seed Programs International, providing seeds and education to impoverished farmers abroad. She is the author of *The Timber Press Guide to Vegetable Gardening in the Southeast* (2013) and a board member of the Organic Seed Alliance.

EMERGING HORTICULTURAL PROFESSIONAL AWARD

Given in the early stages of an individual's career, this award recognizes significant achievements and/or leadership that have advanced the field of horticulture in America. First awarded in 2017.

Inspired by tropical plants since he was a child, **Rizaniño "Riz" Reyes** is a garden consultant and floral designer in Seattle, Washington, known for creatively embracing horticultural diversity with a sophisticated style that belies his 30-something years. His early passion for plants led him to the University of Washington (UW), where in 2006 he earned a degree in environmental horticulture and urban forestry with a specialization in public horticulture. He then worked as a horticulturist at the UW Botanic Gardens Center for Urban Horticulture for several years, as well as operating a small nursery on the side where he propagated rare and unusual plants for Northwest gardeners. In 2015, he took on his current role as gardens manager for the brew pub and hospitality company McMenamain's Anderson School in Bothell, Washington.



Reyes also maintains his own enterprise, RHR Horticulture & Landwave Gardens, overseeing private landscapes and designing cut flowers, in addition to teaching and lecturing for various gar-

den clubs and professional organizations. He volunteers with the UW Farm, where he spearheads its cut flower program and mentors younger horticulturists from nontraditional backgrounds.

LANDSCAPE DESIGN AWARD

Given to an individual whose work has demonstrated and promoted the value of sound horticultural practices in the field of landscape architecture. First awarded in 1974.

As volunteers, **Suzanne Edney** and the late **Harriet Bellerjeau** jointly led the development of the Master Plan for the JC Raulston Arboretum (JCRA) in Raleigh, North Carolina.

The founder of Custom Landscapes Inc., in Apex, North Carolina, Edney was one of the first volunteers at the JCRA in the early 1980s. There she met Bellerjeau, a landscape architect working in



Above: Suzanne Edney with JCRA Master Plan. Left: Harriet Bellerjeau

Raleigh who was also an early volunteer. Recognizing that the rapidly growing arboretum needed a plan to steer its development, in 2005 Edney and Bellerjeau offered to organize and oversee the work of a Grassroots Master Plan Committee composed of other professional designers. The idea was approved by the JCRA administration and the committee began work in 2006. Over the next 10 years, Edney and Bellerjeau contributed their landscape design vision along with thousands of hours of volunteer time. Among the highlights of the plan were restoration of the iconic Lath House structure, creation of accessible pathways that improved visitor flow around the arboretum, and relocation and design of the Finley Nottingham Rose Garden. Bellerjeau died in 2017, but Edney is still involved with the JCRA's Master Plan Committee.

Nominations for 2020 Awards

Help us give recognition to deserving "horticultural heroes" by nominating someone you know for one of the 2020 Great American Gardeners Awards. Look for more details in the July/August 2019 issue of this magazine or online on our website at www.ahsgardening.org/awards.

MERITORIOUS SERVICE AWARD

Recognizes a past Board member or friend of the American Horticultural Society for outstanding service in support of the Society's goals, mission, and activities. First awarded in 1980.

An AHS member and dedicated volunteer since 2001, **Marthe Haubert** passed away in 2018 at 74. Marty, as she was known



to friends and fellow volunteers, was an avid gardener who gave countless hours of service over the years, helping maintain the gardens at River Farm, the AHS's 25-acre headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia. She also helped to ensure the success of numerous events and programs, such as the organization's annual plant sale, gala, and Seed Exchange. When not volunteering, she enjoyed spending time with her grandchildren and traveling the world with her husband, John.

B.Y. MORRISON COMMUNICATIONS AWARD

Recognizes effective and inspirational communication—through print, radio, television, and/or online media—that advances public interest and participation in horticulture.

Named for Benjamin Yoe Morrison (1891-1966), writer, landscape architect, plant breeder, and artist. Formerly known as the Horticultural Communication Award, it was first awarded in 1987. This award merged with the Horticultural Writing Award (which debuted in 1953) in 2005.

Gary Bachman is the award-winning host of the Mississippi State University (MSU) Extension Service's *Southern Gardening*



television and radio shows and a newspaper columnist and social media personality. Through wide-ranging media, along with frequent personal appearances, he has been sharing gardening information with a weekly audience of as many as two million people since 2010. More than 300 videos of his *Southern Gardening* shows are available

on the university's website and through YouTube.

An Extension/Research Professor of Horticulture at MSU's Coastal Research & Extension Center in Biloxi, Bachman earned his bachelor's and master's degrees at Clemson University before going on for his doctorate at the Ohio State University.

Before moving to MSU, Bachman was on the faculty at Tennessee Technological University and Illinois State University. Among his many awards is 2018 recognition by the American Society for Horticultural Science for *Southern Gardening*. The show also received Mississippi State Extension's Outstanding Communication Award in 2018.

PROFESSIONAL AWARD

Given to a public garden administrator whose achievements throughout his or her career have cultivated widespread interest in horticulture. First awarded in 1953.

Director emeritus of the University of Washington Botanic Gardens and Washington Park Arboretum in Seattle, **John**



Wott has had a significant influence on horticulture in the Pacific Northwest over the course of a distinguished horticultural career that included work in the Cooperative Extension service, teaching, and public garden administration.

Wott was appointed the arboretum's director in 1993, becoming its first on-site director in 20 years. During his 13-year tenure as director of the 230-acre property, he helped in planning and developing the arboretum's Master Plan, reconciling the often competing interests of various stakeholders such as the university, the city of Seattle, immediate neighbors, and state government.

At the time he joined the arboretum, Wott was a horticulture professor at the University of Washington, where he played a major role in the development of the university's Center for Urban Horticulture. He continues to encourage graduate students in the horticulture program through his support of the John A. Wott Fellowship.

JANE L. TAYLOR AWARD

Given to an individual, organization, or program that has inspired and nurtured future horticulturists through efforts in children's and youth gardening.

Named for Jane L. Taylor, youth advocate, horticulturist, educator. First awarded in 2000.

As Associate Director of Community Education with the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS), **Sally McCabe** oversees



Sally McCabe, left, with a volunteer at the Philadelphia Flower Show

multiple urban gardening programs that focus on children, families, and the communities in which they live. One is the PHS Green City Teachers, a hands-on training program where teachers learn how to create school gardens using STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) curricula and to emphasize healthy eating and nutrition. Nearly 1,000 teachers have gone through the training since 1995, and last year McCabe's team helped 80 schools and community gardens build indoor lighting systems for growing plants. McCabe, who has been with the PHS since 1985, also directs the PHS Garden Tenders program, a training course for individuals and groups interested in starting community gardens on vacant lots, in parks, and around schools and churches.

At the Philadelphia Flower Show, McCabe serves as artistic director of the show's Make & Take craft activity. Each year, some 10,000 children and adults engage in this popular attraction, which encourages hands-on activities such as creating floral crowns, small terrariums, and other plant-related projects.

TEACHING AWARD

Given to an individual whose ability to share his or her horticultural knowledge with others has contributed to a better public understanding of the plant world and its important influence on society. First awarded in 1953.

Charlie Hall, Ph.D., is professor and Ellison Chair in International Floriculture at Texas A&M University (TAMU) in College Station. A passionate speaker who grew up in a family-run nursery in North Carolina, Hall is known for his expertise and innovative research in horticultural management, marketing, green industry outlook, and financial analysis. In his teaching, he strives to make students aware of the important role plants and horticulture play in their daily lives and in the world around them.



In addition to his academic work, Hall currently serves as the chief economist for AmericanHort, an industry trade association, and as co-chair of Seed Your Future's Advisory Council. Among his many awards and achievements are the Vice Chancellor's Award in Excellence for Student Counseling and Relations and the Association of Former Students' Distinguished Achievement Award in Teaching, both from TAMU.

Hall received bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Tennessee and his doctorate from Mississippi State University. He began his academic career at TAMU in 1988, where he spent 13 years on the faculty before moving to the University of Tennessee in 2002. In 2007, Hall returned to TAMU in his current role.

COMMUNITY GREENING AWARD

Given for exemplary contributions by an individual, institution, or company that demonstrate the application and value of horticulture to creating livable communities that are greener, healthier, and more equitable. First awarded in 1985 as the Urban Beautification Award; renamed in 2019.

The **Horticultural Society of New York**, popularly known as "The Hort," sponsors an array of urban horticulture programs in the greater New York City area, with a focus on providing horticultural workforce training programs for incarcerated in-



The Hort offers urban horticulture programs focused on job training.

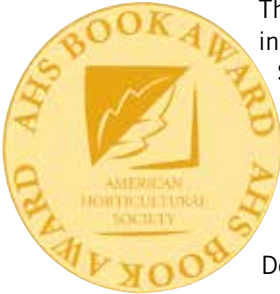
dividuals, offering free or low-cost gardening workshops and classes for the disadvantaged and disabled, and ensuring communities of all income levels have equal access to vibrant and well-maintained greenspaces.

The Hort's GreenHouse program, established in 1989, provides horticultural therapy and life-skills training to sentenced and detained individuals on Riker's Island. The Hort's GreenTeam program provides transitional employment to more than 40 participants, many of whom were formerly incarcerated. The GreenTeam helps to install and care for plantings in public greenspaces in communities throughout New York City. More than 65 percent of GreenTeam participants find full-time employment or return to finish school after completing the training program.

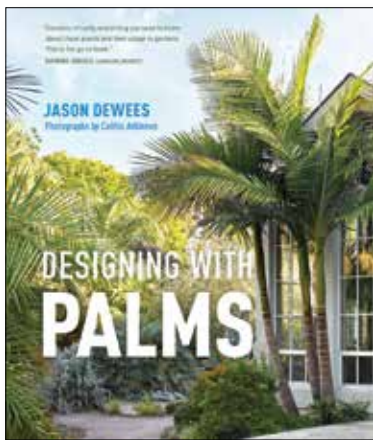
In 2017, the Hort opened a 2,500-square-foot Greenhouse and Education Center in Harlem that offers educational programs and resources to more than 10,000 people annually. In addition to training adults, the Hort has a special program for disadvantaged children ages three to 17 that focuses on engaging with the natural world and using garden-based enrichment activities to improve academic achievement.

2019 AHS Book Award Winners

Each year, the American Horticultural Society recognizes outstanding gardening books published in North America with its annual Book Award. Nominated books are judged by the AHS Book Award Committee on qualities such as writing style, authority, accuracy, and physical quality. This year's award recipients, selected from books published in 2018, are listed below.



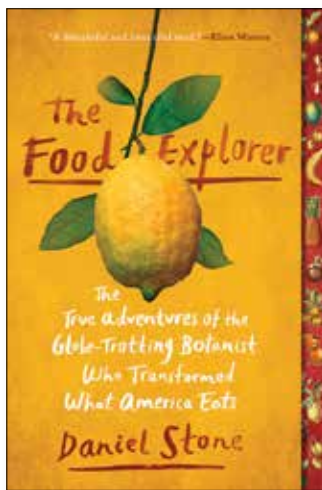
The 2019 Book Award Committee was chaired by **Mary Ann Newcomer**, a garden communicator based in Boise, Idaho. Other members were: **William Aldrich**, past president and Fellow of GardenComm in Springfield, Missouri; **Catriona Tudor Erler**, a garden writer and book author based in Charlottesville, Virginia; **Augustus "Jenks" Farmer**, garden book author and plantsman based in the Columbia, South Carolina, area; **Nancy Rose**, horticulturist and recently retired editor of *Arnoldia*, published by the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts; **Brian Thompson**, manager and curator of the Elisabeth C. Miller Library at the University of Washington Botanic Gardens in Seattle; and **Deb Wiley**, garden writer, editor, book project manager, and Fellow of GardenComm in Des Moines, Iowa.



Designing with Palms

by Jason Dewees; photographs by Caitlin Atkinson. Timber Press.

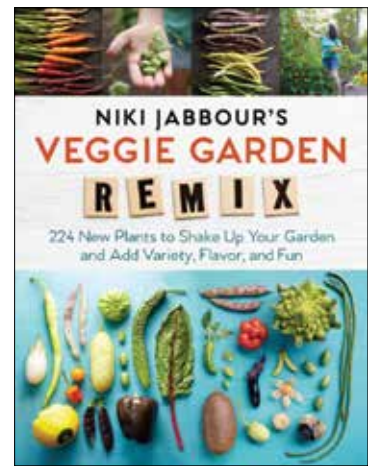
■ Artfully blending horticultural information with design concepts applicable to the diverse palm family, this book impressed Catriona Erler with how it took a "subject that could have been dry and academic and made it beautiful, compelling, and scientifically accurate." Brian Thompson agrees, noting that it "broadened my perspective of palms from a gardening and design standpoint, while being enjoyable to read."



The Food Explorer

by Daniel Stone. Dutton Books.

■ This book details how David Fairchild, an American botanist who traveled the world around the turn of the 20th century in search of intriguing fruits, vegetables, and other plants, would forever change the landscape of the United States with his discoveries. It provides "fascinating insight into how various foods found their way to our grocery store shelves," says William Aldrich. Mary Ann Newcomer calls it "a wonderful story and a piece of history relevant to anyone who eats."



Niki Jabbour's Veggie Garden Remix

by Niki Jabbour. Storey Publishing.

■ Praised for its inviting presentation, beautiful photography, and fresh approach to vegetable gardening, this book will "inspire anyone to experiment and to have some fun with off-the-wall but rewarding veggies," says Jenks Farmer. Deb Wiley notes it is "written in an engaging first-person voice, as if Jabbour is actually sitting at your elbow, encouraging you to grow something new and showing you, through excellent color photographs, what you'll get."