

AHS NEWS SPECIAL

AHS 2016 Great American Gardeners National Award Winners

The American Horticultural Society (AHS) is proud to announce the distinguished recipients of the Society's 2016 Great American Gardeners Awards. Individuals, organizations, and businesses who receive these national awards represent the best in American gardening. Each has contributed significantly to fields such as plant research, garden communication, landscape design, youth gardening, teaching, and commercial horticulture. We applaud their passionate commitment to American gardening and their outstanding achievements within their areas of expertise.

The 2016 awards will be presented on the evening of June 2 during the Great American Gardeners Awards 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.ahs.org/awards or call (703) 768-5700.

Nominations for 2017

Help us give recognition to deserving "horticultural heroes" by nominating someone you know for one of the 2017 Great American Gardeners Awards. To do so, visit www.ahs.org/awards for more information.

LIBERTY HYDE BAILEY AWARD

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.



THE LIFETIME contributions of **John G. Fairey** to American horticulture touch numerous fields, from teaching and research to the nursery industry. Born into a family of gardeners, Fairey found his own path to horticulture. After receiving a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1964, he began his career as a college professor at Texas A&M University in College Station, where he taught design to architecture students.



In 1971 Fairey purchased a rural property in Hempstead, Texas, and began creating a garden he eventually named Peckerwood. Fairey's interest in finding plants adapted to the challenging climate of the central South led him to start exploring southern Texas and neighboring regions of northeastern Mexico.

Over the years, Fairey participated in over 100 plant-hunting trips both on his own and in partnership with public gardens, universities, and nurseries. Among these was a 1991 expedition to Mexico with Harvard University on behalf of the American Cancer Society. The goal was to locate a rare yew species that researchers believed might contain compounds effective against ovarian cancer. In 1987 Fairey cofounded Yucca Do, a mail-order nursery, as a way to introduce and share with other gardeners some of the promising new plants he was discovering and selecting.

Over time Peckerwood grew from seven to 19 acres and became not only a renowned botanical showplace, but a haven for plant diversity. As issues such as overgrazing, mining, and development threaten Mexico's natural areas, Fairey's extensive efforts to document and preserve their rich flora have become increasingly imperative. By some estimates, Peckerwood's preemptive conservation efforts may already have saved thousands of plant species from extinction. To ensure the preservation of the garden and its mission, Peckerwood is now owned by a nonprofit foundation with support from the Garden Conservancy.

Over the course of Fairey's career, he has received many awards, including the prestigious Scott Medal from the Scott Arboretum of Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania in 2013, and the Commercial Award from the American Horticultural Society in 1996 for his work with Yucca Do.