

AHS 2003 GREAT AMERICAN GARDENERS NATIONAL AWARD WINNER
JANE G. PEPPER—LIBERTY HYDE BAILEY AWARD

Making Philadelphia Bloom

by Mary Yee

The Liberty Hyde Bailey Award is given to an individual who resides in North America and has made significant contributions in at least three of the following areas of horticultural activity: teaching, research, writing, plant exploration, administration, art, business, and leadership.

WHEN ASKED what receiving the American Horticultural Society 2003 Liberty Hyde Bailey Award—the Society’s highest award—means to her, Jane G. Pepper replies modestly, “I’m delighted to be recognized by such an old and venerable institution and to be recognized by my peers.”

Recognition is nothing new to Pepper, president of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS), itself a venerable institution with more than 12,000 members that was founded in 1827. She has received awards from many organizations, including the Royal Horticultural Society, National Council of State Garden Clubs, Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce, and AHS’s 1992 Professional Award.

Pepper’s business savvy and penchant for working with people at all levels have been instrumental in helping PHS achieve world renown with the Philadelphia Green community program and the Philadelphia Flower Show—the largest indoor flower show in the world.

J. William Mills III, president of The PNC Financial Services Group, Philadelphia and Southern Jersey, a major corporate sponsor of the flower show, says Pepper’s “skill as a manager and businessperson is equal to her skill as a horticulturist, which is necessary for a not-for-profit organization to be successful in today’s world.” It was this winning combination of skills that, more than 12 years ago, prompted PNC to sign on as the first corporate sponsor of the Philadelphia Flower Show.

SERENDIPITY MAKES A HORTICULTURIST

A native of Scotland, Pepper only discovered a passion for horticulture a year before she came to America, after her mother suffered a physical disability that spring and could not plant out the annuals she had grown in her greenhouse. Although both her parents “always gardened,” Pepper claims she had no particular interest in plants until she began caring for her mother’s garden.

After coming to America in 1967 and marrying the following year, she found a job as a secretary at Haverford College in



Haverford, Pennsylvania. It was there that the college landscaper opened her eyes to the possibility of making a career of working with plants. After receiving degrees in horticulture and landscape design at Temple University and the University of Delaware, she returned to Haverford as a horticulturist. Volunteer work with PHS eventually led to a position as PHS’s public information coordinator in 1979 and chief executive officer in 1981—“a job,” she says, “beyond my wildest dreams.”

A WORLD-CLASS SHOW WITH A SOCIAL CONSCIENCE

PHS has made huge strides in the 20-plus years since Pepper became its president. “When I took over, we had 35 people on staff,” says Pepper. The staff now exceeds 100, and one of the satisfying changes, she

says, is in how the Philadelphia Flower Show has become a valuable asset for the city. “We have made it a national and international show,” she says, “whereas it had been more of a local event. We’ve also tied the show to the economic development of the local community, making it a civic investment for the good of all.”

According to Pepper, the show attracts over 250,000 visitors from the United States and abroad and brings in about \$30 million for the city of Philadelphia during its weeklong run each spring, and it also makes money for PHS. “My interest is plants with people,” says Pepper. The flower show is about providing “a wonderful spring event for the city and generating revenue to put back into the city through the Philadelphia Green program.”

Philadelphia Green, PHS’s acclaimed neighborhood and public landscape greening program, works with community groups in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods to plant trees and gardens in neglected and vacant spaces. The program also helps revitalize green spaces around public sites such as the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The largest such program in the United States, Philadelphia Green serves as a model for similar programs in cities throughout the country.

Successfully implementing programs like Philadelphia Green would be impossible without cooperation from the city, notes Morris Cheston Jr., former chair of the Council of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society and former chair of the Philadelphia Flower Show Executive Committee. “Jane,” says Cheston, “is as known and respected in the board rooms of financial institutions and the mayor’s office and city council as she is by people who live in the rowhouses”—all of which makes her something of a local hero in and around Philadelphia. Cheston says jokingly, “I told her she should move to the city and run for mayor.”

AHS 2003 GREAT AMERICAN GARDENERS NATIONAL AWARD WINNER
P. ALLEN SMITH—HORTICULTURAL COMMUNICATION AWARD

Spreading the Joy of Gardening

by Mary Yee

The Horticultural Communication Award recognizes effective communication using media and research techniques for the purpose of expanding horticultural awareness.

CHANCES ARE you've seen P. Allen Smith at some point on television, whether it was in a guest segment on the "CBS Early Show" demonstrating to viewers how to plant containers or on the Weather Channel providing exclusive gardening reports. Perhaps you've read his gardening articles in *Woman's Day* or browsed the pages of his Web site, pallensmith.com.

If you haven't heard or read of P. Allen Smith before, you will soon. The winner of this year's AHS Horticultural Communication Award is about to launch a new gardening series on PBS, "P. Allen Smith's Garden Home," that ties in with his newly published book of the same title from Clarkson Potter.

Getting the word out about gardening using various media has been Smith's objective for the past 20 years. "My mission is to inspire as many gardeners as I can to get outside and connect with their immediate environment through their own gardens," says Smith.

Aside from its potential to produce beauty for the eyes, Smith believes that gardening is also good for the soul—especially now that his extremely busy schedule often keeps him away from his own garden for long periods of time. "I know what a few hours of planting and pulling weeds can do to restore me," he says, "and being away so much only increases my resolve to encourage people to find the time to get out in the garden."

LESSONS FROM THE PAST

Although he now lives and gardens in Arkansas, Smith, who is a fourth-generation nurseryman, developed his green thumb while growing up in Tennessee. "I

credit my grandparents for instilling in me the love of plants," he says. "From an early age, I was amazed that my granddad knew the name of every plant and could tell me a fascinating story about each one."

In the mid-1980s, Smith had an opportunity to study garden history and design as a post-college Rotary Scholarship student at the University of Manchester in England. While there, he met two people who would have a profound influence in shaping the way he gardens today: teacher David Baldwin and the Viscountess Elizabeth Ashbrook.



"Dr. Baldwin encouraged me to study great gardens the same way student artists study paintings by the fine masters," says Smith. During a visit to one such garden, Arley, in Cheshire, Smith met and struck up a friendship with its owner, Lady Ashbrook. "Lady Ashbrook helped me understand that good design principles could be applied any time, any place, and on any scale," says Smith. Lessons gleaned from visits to Arley and other great gardens in England convinced Smith that American gardens could be equally beautiful.

ALL AMERICA'S A GARDEN

After returning to the United States, Smith ran a retail garden center in Little Rock,

Arkansas, for a decade, all the while designing gardens for clients and educating the public about horticulture through lectures, garden tours, and on local television and radio. Hortus Ltd., the television production company he founded in 1993, enabled Smith to deliver his message to a national audience in 90-second news inserts covering a variety of gardening topics, and later in a half-hour syndicated television program, "P. Allen Smith Gardens."

In April 2002, Smith formed a promotional partnership with The Flower Fields, an alliance of major plant producers, which provides Smith with The Flower Fields brand plants for his media work. "We and Allen have a shared philosophy of demystifying gardening," says Donna Greenbush, marketing manager for The Flower Fields. "People feel comfortable with him right away; he's down to earth."

Susan Sims-Smith (no relation), an Episcopal priest who lives in Little Rock, Arkansas, and has had two gardens designed by Smith, attributes his success as a horticultural communicator to his ability to approach his clients and audience as individuals. "Allen can relate as well to a country farmer," says Sims-Smith, "as he can to a grand duchess in England."

Even after years of lecturing, television appearances, and writing, Smith contends delivering gardening information to the public is not always easy. "I am extremely honored to receive the American Horticultural Society's 2003 Horticultural Communication Award," he says. "At times, when I'm in front of the camera or sitting down to write, I often feel tongue-tied and struggle to find the right words. This award helps me realize that my desire to share my love for gardening and plants comes through in a way others can understand and enjoy."

Mary Yee is managing editor and designer of The American Gardener.