



### The Herbert Medal

The Herbert Medal is the highest honor the American Plant Life Society can bestow upon persons distinguishing themselves by meritorious achievement in advancing the knowledge of bulbous plants, especially those of the Amaryllidaceae. The medal is named for William Herbert (1778-1847), son of Henry Herbert, Earl of Carnarvon. William Herbert had a predilection for amaryllids and achieved success in their hybridization and published his research findings in several monumental works. His contributions as a pioneer geneticist and plant breeder, and his arrangement of the Amaryllidaceae, helped set the stage upon which other workers, both amateur and professional, have been able to advance.

Awarding of the Herbert Medal is done annually and on special occasions to those individuals selected by the Board of Directors of the Society. Medalists need not be members of the Society to be recipients. Below are listed those individuals honored as Herbert Medalists:

#### HERBERT MEDALISTS

- \*Mr. Henry P. Nehring, Florida, Posth. 1937
- \*Mr. Theodore L. Mead, Florida, Posth. 1937
- \*Mr. Arthington Worsley, England, 1937
- \*Mr. Ernst H. Krelage, Holland, 1938
- \*Mr. Cecil Houdyshel, California 1938
- \*Maj. Albert Pam, England, 1938
- \*Mr. Pierre S. duPont, Delaware, 1938
- Mr. Jan de Graff, Oregon, 1938
- \*Mr. Fred H. Howard, California, 1939
- \*Mr. Sydney Percy-Lancaster, India, 1939
- \*Dr. J. Hutchinson, England, 1939
- \*Mr. Carl Purdy, California, 1939
- \*Dr. A. B. Stout, New York, 1939
- \*Mr. H. W. Pugsley, England, 1940
- \*Mr. W. M. James, California, 1941
- Prof. Dr. A. Fernandes, Portugal, 1942
- \*Miss Elizabeth Lawrence, N. Carolina, 1943
- \*Dr. Henry A. Jones, Maryland, 1944
- Mr. R. G. Huey, Kentucky, 1945
- \*Mr. Guy L. Wilson, Northern Ireland, 1946
- \*Mr. R. W. Wheeler, Florida, 1947
- \*Dr. R. A. Dyer, South Africa, 1948
- Capt. C. O. Fairbairn, Australia, 1949
- \*Mrs. Mary G. Henry, Pennsylvania, 1950
- \*Mr. Mulford B. Foster, Florida, 1951
- \*Dr. J. C. Th. Uphof, Florida, 1952
- \*Mr. E. A. Bowles, England, 1953
- Mr. Thomas R. Manley, Pennsylvania, 1954
- \*Dr. Robert F. Hoover, California, 1955
- \*Mr. E. O. Orpet, California, 1956
- \*Mrs. Morris W. Clint, Texas, 1957
- \*Mr. Wyndham Hayward, Florida, 1958
- \*Dr. Robert G. Thornburgh, California, 1959
- \*Prof. Ira S. Nelson, Louisiana, 1960
- Mr. Frederick B. Jones, Texas, 1961
- Dr. Floyd F. Smith, Maryland, 1962
- \*Mr. W. D. Morton, Jr., Louisiana, 1963
- Mr. S. Y. Caldwell, Tennessee, 1964
- \*Mr. Robert D. Goedert, Florida, 1965
- \*Mr. Leon Boshoff-Mostert, S. Africa, 1966
- \*Dr. Martin Cardenas Hermosa, Bolivia, 1967
- Dr. Robert P. Kahn, Maryland, 1968
- \*Mr. W. Quinn Buck, California, 1969
- Dr. Thad M. Howard, Texas, 1970
- \*Dr. C. G. Ruppel, Argentina, 1971
- Mr. J. L. Doran, California, 1972
- Dr. Cesar Vargas, Peru, 1973
- Sr. Pierfelice Ravenna, Chile, 1974
- \*Dr. John M. Cage, California, 1975
- \*Mr. Floor Barnhoorn, South Africa, 1976
- \*Mrs. Emma D. Menninger, California, 1977
- Dr. W. S. Flory, Jr., North Carolina, 1978
- \*Mr. Harry Blossfeld, Brazil, 1979
- Mr. Charles D. Cothran, California, 1980
- Mr. W. L. Tjaden, England, 1981
- Walter\* & Hilda Latapie, Louisiana, 1982
- Mrs. A. C. Pickard, Alvin, Texas, 1983
- \*Mrs. Marcia C. Wilson, Texas, Posth. 1983
- \*Dr. Hamilton P. Traub, California, Posth. 1985
- Dr. Thomas W. Whitaker, California, 1988
- Mr. Grant E. Mitsch, Oregon, 1988
- Mr. L. S. Hannibal, California, 1988

\*Deceased

## 1988 HERBERT MEDALIST GRANT E. MITSCH: DAFFODIL HYBRIDIST

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[The following biographical information was adapted from information supplied by Mrs. Elise Havens and from the June 1987 issue of *The Daffodil Journal*.]

THE famous American daffodil hybridizer, Grant E. Mitsch, was born in Woodbine, Kansas on May 19, 1907, the eldest of eight children of Eleanor Middleton Mitsch and George A. Mitsch. George Mitsch was cashier in the bank at Woodbine and later farmed. His son, Grant, had an intense interest in plants as a small boy and put any spending money he had into seed purchases. He attended schools in Woodbine and in 1925 the family moved to Oregon where he attended high school at Brownville, Oregon.

In 1927, at 20 years of age, Grant began a mail order business in gladiolus. Aside from a short period when he served as a substitute mail carrier, Grant was always self-employed. He was a very quiet and shy man, having a passion for reading and studying.

He gained a great deal of botanical knowledge on his own and was on the alert for sources of unusual plants of interest. After purchasing daffodil bulbs from the late Guy Wilson, the two men began a correspondence which lasted until Wilson's death. The interaction between the two was a great encouragement to Mitsch and he began his daffodil hybridizing program.

In 1934 the first Mitsch crosses were made, and in 1938 he used his first seedling in a subsequent cross. He was a strong believer in building and made optimum use of his seedlings to do so. His earliest crosses reflect searching for and finding goals which, in some cases, were later attained.

There were three areas of special interest to him, i.e., Classes 5-12, reverse bicolors, and pinks. These goals appear very early in his hybridizing program. The hybridizing attempt in Classes 5-12 was to produce various colors with proper form in nearly all of the classes with the foresight that a broad scope of endeavor was vital not only for personal challenge, but to interest others. Among the species, those which interested him most, were triandrus, cyclamineus, and jonquils. In the former two, his first crosses were made in 1940; the first named were 'Lemon Drops' (class 5) and 'Estrellita' (class 6). Tremendous improvements and additions have been made in the last 30 years, using direct crosses with the species and intercrossing. A number of class 6's and some class 5's are fertile and greatly expedite improvement.

'Estrellita' was introduced in 1954, a rather small flower of less than excellent form but still graceful and early. It was followed by 'Preface' in 1956 and then in 1966 by the ever popular 'Jetfire', a fine red-cupped cyclamineus which is not only very healthy, but an excellent increaser. In 1972 came 'Surfside', larger than most Division 6 flowers, with broad perianth segments but retaining the grace of its class. 'Cotinga', Mitsch's first pink cyclamineus, appeared in 1976, a well-formed characteristic flower. Also that year came 'Rapture', and 'Rival'. 'Carib', the best pink cyclamineus to date and 'Wheatear', the first reverse bicolor in the division, appear in 1979. 'Chaffinch', a very long lasting flower, appeared in 1980, but 'Ocean Breeze' arrived in 1979, the first white in this class, a small and perfectly formed cyclamineus. The last five years have brought 'Cazique' and 'Inca', another reverse but early blooming, as well as 'Phalarope', a consistent winner. 'Warbler', 'Plumeleteer', 'Ouzel', and 'Sparrow' appeared in 1987.



Figure 1. Grant Mitsch, probably in the early- to mid-1930's.

Mitsch's steady aim for quality and faithfulness to characteristics of the division show up again in his Division 5 introductions, even though the quality of 5's doesn't equal that of either the 6's or 7's. 'Yellow Warbler' appeared in 1954 and was followed by the old favorite, 'Lemon Drops'. More than ten years passed before 'Piculet' (1969) and 'Petrel' were introduced. 'Petrel' came from a 'Quick Step'  $\times$  *N. triandrus albus* cross which produced many flowers, a few of which were subsequently introduced. 'Lapwing' was introduced in 1975, a good increaser with marked contrast. 'Akepe', a much-talked about flower, was introduced in 1979, one of the nicest pinks with pure clear color. In the same year 'Lavalier', a reverse, appeared followed by 'Mission Bells' in 1984. From the latter came 'Silver Bells'

which is not a good increaser and lacks good health. His best triandrus to date is 'Sunday Chimes', which was introduced in 1987.

Jonquils also have many lovely colors and forms, but of course are more difficult in that the hybrids bear little or no seed, making line breeding virtually non-existent. However, there have been two breakthroughs. Many have heard the story Grant Mitsch told of when he was cultivating after flowering season and noticed swelling pods on 'Quick Step' and getting off the tractor to examine them, found viable seed. Some years later his daughter, now Mrs. Elise Havens, was collecting seed about the first week of June. Many times jonquil pods swell and collapse, so she did not think much of it when there were many pods in "Hillstar", but upon closer examination found those pods filled with seed. Needless to say, the following year nearly every bloom of 'Hillstar' was crossed. The seed quantity was amazing and the results of these crosses is being observed with great interest. One with as much appeal as any is the cross between 'Quick Step' and 'Hillstar'. Perhaps a whole new line is opened to the trade if the progeny of this cross produce seed as readily as their parents.

Beginning in 1962 with 'Vireo', there has been a steady progression of good quality Division 7 cultivars. In 1965 came 'Quick Step' which shows some pink in Oregon, but is not as colorful as more recent introductions. However, it is useful for breeding. The late-blooming 'Stratosphere' came in 1968, and 'Oryx' in 1969 which inherited its round perianth from its pollen parent, 'Aircastle'. 'Step Forward' (1970) is a second generation jonquil coming from 'Quick Step'. 'Flycatcher' came in 1970, a shorter flower good for the rockery, and the floriferous 'Quail' appeared in 1974. 'Hillstar', 'Triller', the pink-rimmed 'Pink Angel', and 'Life', a good reverse, have followed in the long line of Mitsch 7's. The fact that there is now a pink and a reverse bicolor for development is a most welcome factor.

In the late 1930's and early 1940's, reverse bicolors were just beginning to appear and Mitsch's quest for them began with Guy Wilson's 'King of the North' × 'Content' cross which gave 'Spellbinder'. Mitsch repeated the cross and produced some lemons and some reverse bicolors. 'Luna Moth', 'Lemon Meringue', 'Lunar Sea', 'Entrancement' and many others resulted. He then crossed 'Binkie' by this series of seedlings and produced 'Bethany'. It is an exceptionally good show flower, which was introduced in 1958, as was 'Nazareth', from the same cross, and has proven to be a good parent for Divisions 5 and 6. 'Daydream', also from the same cross, came along in 1960 and has dominated this class ever since, not only in shows but also as a parent. Attainment of reverse bicolors in classes 5, 6, and 7 has been a challenge and improvements are still being made.

The third area, namely pinks, has been of very special interest to nearly everyone in hybridizing daffodils. Mrs. Havens remembers as a young teenager hearing her father say that his aim was to produce a red daffodil from pink breeding as opposed to orange. When he began, most of the pinks were of very poor form, so when he received 'Green Island', it seemed logical to cross it into the pink line which provided much superior perianths and from there work began to intensify color.

'Radiation' appeared in 1954, the first Mitsch pink, followed by 'Accent' (1960) an excellent parent, 'Audubon' (1965), a Division 3 flower, 'Rubythroat' (1969) the first pink/red, and 'At Dawning' (1975) a small but well-formed trumpet. The 'Precedent' × 'Eclat' cross produced the G13 series, including 'Meditation' and 'Precocious', all highly colored, decorative blooms with very white perianths.

In the last several years, the Mitsch breeding program began to see a pink flush in a number of perianths and at first everyone wondered if it was a reflection from the intense cup



Figure 2. Grant Mitsch with some of his daffodil hybrids.



Figure 3. Grant Mitsch with the Peter Barr Cup, 1973-74.

color, but upon closer examination over a number of seasons, it was substantiated that the perianth did indeed contain pink pigmentation. Some years back, color of intensity was found in perianths of poorly formed flowers such as one called 'Riot'. However, 'Culmination' (1982), the first of the 'Romance' × 'Cool Flame' seedlings to be introduced, noted for its smooth, perfect form and clean color, also shows a pink hue in its perianth.

The new 'Music' is a perfectly formed flower consistently giving an intense pink cast. Of course, the flowers have been used to intensify the color further and progress is being made. Pink doubles have shown immense improvements as well.

Combining the above two areas (pinks and reverse bicolors) opened another very unusual area, the pink and yellow, beginning with 'Milestone', a color class which has shown a great deal of improvement for a number of years. Mitsch's opinion about collecting open pollinated seed was particularly successful in this color class, for 'Milestone' as well as others have come from this means.

Mention should be made of several other areas of interest which Grant Mitsch pursued as well. The round flowers of excellent form were very impressive to him and from this interest came 'Aircastle' and 'Old Satin' (toned flowers) as well as a number of Division 3's such as 'Cool Crystal', 'Crystal River' and 'Dreamcastle'.

Mrs. Havens, who now runs the business her father started, attended a convention a few years ago where someone introduced John Lea to her as her "competitor." His ready reply was that they are allies. He was emphasizing the camaraderie and cooperation which exists between growers. It was this kind of loyalty which was a special boon to her father in his correspondence with Guy Wilson and Lionel Richardson. Competitive spirit was replaced by cooperation. The same attitude prevailed when Grant Mitsch met Murray and Estella Evans. Their ready help, exchange of ideas, and constant cooperation was always evident. In fact, Murray needled Elise into taking a more active interest in learning varieties when she was about 11 or 12 years old and they worked with the Mitsch family digging bulbs. They came to be very special people and are thought of as family.

In addition to rewarding the daffodil fans of the world with his hybrids, Grant Mitsch has been honored by them. In 1984, Grant was deeply gratified when Marie Bozievich and Gene Bauer presented him with paintings which they had done. Grant and his family appreciated these and the pictures have given them many hours of enjoyment. Both pictures hang on his living room wall.

Grant Mitsch's last catalog was that of his 50th Anniversary in 1977. His eldest daughter, Eileen Frey, along with her husband, carries on many of the miniatures. She is also a school teacher. His youngest daughter, Elise Havens, along with her husband and family, carry on the hybridizing business and have put out the catalog since her father's retirement. His wife, Amy Mitsch, always deeply involved in the hybridizing business and beside him every step, passed away in 1982.



Figure 4. Grant and Amy Mitsch, 1976.