

In September, the SCHS gathered at the Los Angeles County Arboretum for the annual Horticulturist of the Year banquet and award presentation. This year's honoree was John Schoustra in recognition of his accomplishments in the field of horticulture, both as owner of Greenwood Daylily Gardens in Somis, and his continuing work with numerous organizations. John has served on the boards of many plant societies, as well as being a current and long term board member of the SCHS and the Nursery Growers Association (NGA). During his career he has also served as Chief Horticulturist at Rancho Los Alamitos Historic Site and Gardens, taught classes at the L.A. Arboretum and South Coast Botanic Gardens, and lectured extensively both nationally and internationally.

Before the award ceremony, guests perused and bid on a wide selection of Silent Auction



donations, then socialized and enjoyed an alfresco meal catered by the Peacock Café staff, at tables decorated

with centerpieces provided by John's nursery. Following dinner, the award ceremonies began with SCHS president Steve Gerischer acknowledging past Horticulturist of the Year recipients in the audience, and giving a brief introduction to John. He then turned the floor over to Carol Bornstein (speaking for Janet Brown Becker) and Richard Baron, who talked about their personal relationships with John and lauded his many achievements.

Carol read a letter sent by Janet Becker, the historic gardens expert at Rancho Los Alamitos Gardens, where she first came to know John when he worked there for five years in the early 1990s as the Head of Horticulture. Together they helped craft the garden's Master Plan. Janet cited John's further influence on the garden through his insistence on preserving historic plantings from installed under the first owner, Susan Bixby, as well as updating the irrigation system to meet the needs of specific plants, and working with students. She wrote of John's generosity and work ethic, stating the Rancho would not have today's botanical collections without his guidance over 20 years ago.

The following speaker was John's friend and neighbor, Richard Baron, co-founder of Baron Brothers Nursery in Camarillo, who has known him since the 1970s. He told of how he was introduced to the Nursery Grower's Association by John, and how his 40-acre property in Somis has twice been a tour destination for the SCHS, after John made the suggestion to him in 2009. He congratulated John on the award he felt was well-earned, and then turned the floor over to the honoree.

John began his reminiscences by telling the audience how happy he was when he joined the SCHS because he was in the company of other "plant nerds" as well as well-known horticulturists of the time such as Gary Hammer. He then spoke about his own history in a presentation titled

"Horticultural Heroes and Highlights," sharing personal inspirations and influences of the past 30 years – from his days at the University of California at Berkeley, through his professional career and up to the present.

He began by speaking of his long-time association with the L.A. Arboretum, where he helped install the Kallam Perennial Garden in the early 1990s, as well as planting the trees around the Peacock Café. He expressed his appreciation of Richard Schulhof, the Arboretum's current CEO, for giving hope to new generations for the future of landscaping in Southern California, and thanked his parents Jack and Hermine Schoustra for introducing him to a love of plants and lifelong learning, as well as his wife Cynthia, who is also his professional partner in running the nursery operations at Greenwood.

John spoke of how, by the 1980s, the diversity of available landscape plant selections was only about 5% of what existed in the early 1990s. However, a renaissance in horticulture was about to begin – coinciding with the start of John's own career. Upon graduating from U.C. Berkeley, he cofounded a landscape company that for 10 years designed, built and maintained a variety of projects, before establishing Greenwood Daylily Gardens in 1989, and continuing his work with other SoCal organizations. While employed at Rancho Los Alamitos, his former Berkeley professor and mentor, Russ Beatty, was a consultant there. When he read Beatty's article for Pacific Horticulture Society on "The Browning of the Greensward," John was influenced to continually amend his landscaping practices in consideration of their environmental impact.



Photos by: Sabine Steinmetz

John's slide show continued with his recollections of teachers, volunteers, colleagues and friends who shaped his personal history, including: Dan Wheeler, who taught a Regional Occupation Program for the LAUSD; John Kabashima, Ben Faber and Jim Boethke from UC Cooperative Extension; plant breeder Jack Roberson and his wife Jo, who helped John begin breeding his daylilies; landscape architects Regula and Doug Campbell and also Calvin Abe, who were clients and then became friends; garden writers Susan Heeger and Sharon Cohoon; and landscape patrons such as hotelier Steve Wynn, developer Rick Caruso, Donald Bren of the Irvine Company, David Murdock of the Sherwood Country Club and Anton Segerstrom of South Coast Plaza, all who create horticultural jobs and opportunities. Last, but not least, John mentioned a few of

the "plant fanatics" that have enriched his life, including: Jay Kapac, Keith Zary, Mike Boss, Peter McCrohan, Steve Ball, and the multi-generational Acosta Family of urban farmers.

After John finished his presentation, Steve Gerischer presented him with the plaque for the Horticulturist of the Year award, and guests returned to the auction room to gather their many winnings – a satisfying and rewarding conclusion to a very enjoyable event.

✂ Sabine Steinmetz

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*This year's Silent Auction was a big success, thanks to the huge selection of donated plants, objects and incredible gift certificates – resulting in generous bids by members and guests who participated so enthusiastically!*

*We appreciate everyone, and would like to go on record to thank all of our donors.  
(listed in alphabetical order)*

**Businesses:** Agri-Turf, Bellefontaine Nursery, Dominus Plantarum/Los Angeles Cycad Source, Fig Earth Supply, Greenwood Daylily Gardens, Potted, Matilija Nursery, Mountain States Wholesale Nursery, Anton Segerstrom/South Coast Plaza and Somis Succulent Specialties

**Individuals:** Laura Bauer, Eric & Ann Brooks, Joan Citron, Steven Gerischer, Sherry Heyman, Willard Huyck, Sandy Masuo, Shirley Marneus, Yoav Paskowitz, Pat Steen, Sabine Steinmetz, Dave Verity and Royce D. Wood

*As always, we are grateful to the Arboretum staff for providing invaluable assistance all evening, and Nicole's crew at the Peacock Café for catering another delicious meal for us, and assisting with clean up afterward.*

*Last, we appreciate the SCHS board for their efforts in planning the event, prepping and cleaning up, with special thanks going to Laura Bauer, who missed the dinner and presentation while tallying our many, many auction bids...*

*Thank you so very much - to everyone!*

SHARING SECRETS RESPONSES

*What are your favorite annuals for transitioning your garden into autumn?*



I love Calendulas. They're so bright and easy. They don't die like Pansies, and unlike Snapdragons, they bloom a long time. And the petals feel like bird feathers.... But, very few of my clients let me plant orange in their yard.

- Aprille Curtis

I like to display feathery "florist" celosia in autumn colors on my front porch - yellow, orange, and red - and I like the mini peppers too, same colors, plus sometimes purple!

- Anonymous