

Louis J. Edgerton

January 28, 1914 – July 26, 2007

Louis J. Edgerton, 93, Professor Emeritus in the Department of Horticulture, died July 26, 2007 in Ithaca, New York.

Professor Edgerton was born in Adena, Ohio on January 28, 1914, the son of Quaker parents Walter J. Edgerton and Anna Taber Edgerton. He attended the Friends (Quaker) elementary school in Barnesville, Ohio (near Adena), then Olney Friends School, a small boarding school in Barnesville for high school level students. After graduating from Olney in 1932, he attended the College of Wooster (Ohio) from 1932-34, and then transferred to The Ohio State University where he received his B.S. degree in 1937, with a major in Horticulture.

Cornell's Graduate School accepted him in 1937, where he began work toward his Ph.D. degree in Pomology (fruit studies). Interest in this subject was, no doubt, related to the fruit farm on which he was raised. At Cornell, he was one of several graduate students of that period who worked under the guidance of the late A.J. Heinicke, a pioneering fruit tree physiologist of considerable renown. Louis was granted the Ph.D. degree in 1941.

He spent four years with the USDA Forest Service during the war years, and then was appointed to the faculty of Cornell University in 1946 as an Assistant Professor.

As a Cornell faculty member, he had research, teaching and extension responsibilities. As a teacher, he introduced many students who were interested in fruit growing to their first course in the subject, and many of those students, in their time, became leaders in the fruit industry in New York State and elsewhere. He committed a substantial amount of time to extension duties, speaking to numerous groups throughout New York and other venues with respect to the latest developments in the fruit industry. But it is his research activities that are best known.

His research interests included, among others, cold hardiness of deciduous fruit plants, chemical fruit thinning, control of premature apple fruit abscission in the fall, mechanical harvesting, and various aspects of synthetic chemical plant growth regulators and their use in the fruit industry.

These studies took him from the Cornell greenhouses and orchards to numerous growers' orchards from one end of New York State to the other, as well as to orchards and laboratories in other parts of this country and the world. His sabbatical leaves and other travel and research expeditions found him at various times at the University of California at Davis, in England, Scotland, France, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, The Netherlands, and Belgium. A Fulbright Award in 1966 allowed him to spend several months in Egypt, and yet another sabbatical leave, in 1977, found him in Australia and New Zealand. His numerous publications and other professional activities attracted students from the United States and from around the world.

He was a Fellow of the American Society for Horticultural Science. He established the Edgerton Career Teaching Award for outstanding teaching by members of Cornell's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

During his busy schedule, he found time to serve as Chairperson for the Department of Pomology from 1970-75.

He retired as Professor Emeritus in 1979. However, in retirement he continued for many years to be active in research, extension work, and student advising, and could be found in his office nearly every day till near the end.

Dr. Edgerton married Edith Hartz of Chestnut Hill, Pennsylvania in 1946. She was deceased in 2004. His son, John Edgerton and family of Akron, Ohio; daughter, Mary Edgerton of Albany, New York; and daughter, Sara Edgerton Thompson and family of Cape Girardeau, Missouri survive him.

Dr. Edgerton was a longtime member of the Ithaca Friends (Quaker) Meeting. Memorial Services were held at Kendal at Ithaca on September 2, 2007.

Loyd E. Powell, Jr., Chairperson; Leroy L. Creasy, Edwin B. Oyer