

George Lawrence Good

December 14, 1940 – December 24, 2007

George Lawrence Good, Professor of Ornamental Horticulture and authority on nursery crop, landscape, and pesticide management in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs), died unexpectedly at home the morning of December 24, 2007. He was universally liked and respected, and will especially be remembered for his knowledge, compassion, integrity, humility, enthusiasm, and humor.

He was born on December 14, 1940, to George and Florence Good of Cincinnati, Ohio. After the untimely death of his father, his mother married William Sparrow, who helped raise him and whom George greatly respected. He received his elementary and secondary education in Cincinnati, and during the summers from 1958-62, was employed by John P. Shay Landscape Company, an experience that fueled his life-long interest in landscape plants.

In fall 1959, he enrolled at Ohio State University, majoring in ornamental horticulture. Among the faculty members who influenced his career were Professors L.C. Chadwick, D.C. Kiplinger, as well as Robert O. Miller who encouraged his entry into graduate studies at Cornell University. Graduate study began in fall 1963, under the direction of Professor Harold B. Tukey, Jr. George studied leaching of nutrients from plants by mists of water applied during rooting of cuttings, a component of crop nutrient management. He received his Master of Science degree in 1965 and Doctorate in 1968. George fondly remembered his graduate experience, relating stories involving Professors F.C. Stewart, David W. Bierhorst, Robert E. Lee, A.M.S. Pridham, and others, and activities with colleagues, including bowling, softball, and fishing.

It was during graduate studies that he met department employee, Carolyn McFall. They married in 1965, and raised two children, Matthew and Jennifer. George greatly enjoyed his family and in recent years his grandchildren, living in the country, reading, learning about historic events, fishing, hunting, gardening, barbecuing, spending time with his Brittany Spaniels, Lacey and Buster, and baking his wonderful bread.

In 1968, he was invited to join the Cornell faculty in the Department of Floriculture and Ornamental Horticulture launching a research and education career related to production and management of landscape plants. He rose to Associate Professor in 1974 and Professor in 1980.

Early collaboration with colleague, Professor Peter Steponkus, and graduate students, led to pioneering studies of woody plant root hardiness, demonstrating that roots often are less cold tolerant than shoots, and revolutionizing methods of over-wintering container nursery stock in northern climates.

George worked tirelessly on behalf of the state nursery, landscape, and arboriculture professions, and the Cornell Cooperative Extension field staff enormously valued his knowledge, wisdom, and mentorship. His outreach in ornamental horticulture extended to weed and fertilizer management practices as well as organizing training for safer application of pesticides. He also collaborated with public sector horticulturists to further sound horticultural practices in state, municipal, and educational institution plantings, including Cornell Plantations.

At the national level, he served as state liaison to the federal government's interregional research program, member of the oversight committee of the rhododendron-breeding program at Holden Arboretum, Mentor, Ohio, and pesticide coordinator for CALS with the American Association of Pesticide Education. Within the state, he was member of the Plant Industry Advisory Board of the New York State (NYS) Department of Agriculture and Markets, and committee chair for many years of the NYS Gold Medal of Horticulture, an annual award presented jointly by the NYS Nursery and Landscape Association and NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets. He was a member of the Board of Directors of Preferred Commerce, Inc.

During his academic career, George served at the University level on the Physical Education Committee and as department representative to the University Senate. Within CALS, he served on the Academic Achievement and Petitions Committee, Extension Scholarship Committee, Cornell Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Operating Committee, Ornamentals IPM Committee, eight ad hoc Promotion to Tenure or Full Professor Committees, CALS Policy Committee, and the Plant Science Curriculum Committee. He was Department Extension Leader for many years, CALS Nursery/Landscape Industry Program Leader through most of his career, and a member of the Horticulture Teaching Committee.

His courses in Nursery Management and Landscape Management were well subscribed for the depth of conceptual insights and practical experience gained as well as for the many stories George told. Described by one student, the courses were "extremely informative, practically oriented, relaxed, personal, and definitely the best and most fun of those I have taken at Cornell."

He served as faculty advisor to the undergraduate Hortus Forum from 1997-2005, faithfully attending meetings and helping to plan study tours, often serving as tour leader. From 2001-05, he was advisor to the Alpha Chapter of the honorary floriculture/ornamental horticulture society, Pi Alpha Xi. He identified qualified undergraduate and graduate students each year, invited each to membership, and read insightful excerpts from the minutes of the society, from as early as 1923, at the annual student recognition ceremony.

During his career, George advised hundreds of undergraduate students, and served on the committees of 22 graduate students, for whom he was major professor for 14. He was a constant source of wisdom and nurture to faculty members.

He served as Acting Chair of the Department of Floriculture and Ornamental Horticulture for six months in 1980-81, and from 1988-97, chaired the unit, skillfully guiding it with sensitivity, humor, and insight through an exceptionally difficult period of shrinkage of public funding and downsizing.

George authored more than 34 scientific publications, 20 scientific meeting presentations, and 38 extension/public service bulletins, crop profiles, and other publications. Throughout his career, he edited the Production and Maintenance of Trees and Shrubs portion of the annually produced CALS Cornell Pest Management Guidelines series. He was a respected and sought after speaker at industry-related workshops and seminars.

After relinquishing department chair responsibilities, he took his only sabbatical leave. While on leave, he was asked by the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, to, when he returned, assume the role of Director of the Cornell Pesticide Management Education Program, which he did with distinction in a half-time capacity from 1998-2005. During this period, he also collaborated with Richard Weir, retired Cornell Cooperative Extension educator from Long Island, to teach his Nursery Management and Landscape Management courses and to rewrite Cornell Information Bulletins for the nursery and landscape professions.

George was active in professional societies: American Society for Horticultural Science, International Plant Propagators' Society, International Society of Arboriculture, and American Association of Pesticide Safety Educators, as well as honorary societies: Sigma Xi, Gamma Sigma Delta, and Pi Alpha Xi.

He retired December 2005 and was appointed Professor Emeritus, teaching his course in Nursery Management for the last time during the fall semester of that year. He also continued to be involved with some research and Cornell Cooperative Extension activities. At the time of his death, he was actively collaborating with Professor Leslie Weston to develop management strategies for difficult to control broadleaf perennial weeds in nurseries and Christmas tree farms, a NYS Farm Viability Program funded initiative.

Among many recognitions and awards he received were:

- 1977 - Award of Merit of the NYS Arborists' Association; Award of Merit of the NYS Nurseryman's Association
- 1978 - NYS Nurseryman's Association Hall of Fame Award
- 1979-1980 - Ho Nun De Kah (CALs student honorary society) Professor of Merit, chosen by the 1980 senior class
- 1984 - American Society for Horticultural Science's Nursery Extension Award in appreciation for dedicated service to the nursery industry
- 1985 - American Association of Nurserymen's Norman J. Coleman award for achievements in horticultural research
- 1989 - Certificate of Appreciation by the Eastern Region of American Association of Nurserymen
- 1993 - Senior Scholar Award by the NYS Arborists' Association
- 1995 - Hortus Forum planted and dedicated in George's honor one of his favorite trees, a scarlet oak, on the east lawn of Risley Hall
- 1997 - NYS Gold Medal of Horticulture Award; received a Cornell chair from the NYS Turfgrass Association during their summer field day;
- 2000 - Arborist of the Year Award of the NYS chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture
- 2001 - Outstanding Alumnus of the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources at The Ohio State University
- 2005 - Friend of the Green Industry by the NYS Turfgrass Association; the Environmental Award and Friend of the Industry Award from the Nassau/Suffolk Landscape Gardener's Association; Hortus Forum planted and dedicated in George's honor another of his favorite trees, a red oak, on the north lawn of Roberts Hall.
- 2008 - posthumously, the Department of Horticulture dedicated a grove of selected compact oak trees near the Plant Science Building in his memory; through a gift from the NYS Arborists' Association, a red oak was planted in George's memory near the top of Newman Meadow at Cornell Plantations; Cornell's Long Island Horticultural Research and Education Center staff planted

a paper bark maple at its annual industry field day, remembering George as a beloved teacher, listener, researcher, and friend of the Long Island ornamentals industry; the NYS Nursery and Landscape Association honored him with the planting of a golden chain tree at the entrance of Cornell's Plant Science Building; and the annual NYS Gold Medal of Horticulture Award, established in 1982, was renamed the George L. Good Gold Medal of Horticulture.

Nursery and landscape practitioners have summarized best the stabilizing and nurturing influence of George Good on the profession. Early in George's career, George Schichtel, nurseryman, industry leader, and 1978 NYS Nursery Association Awards Committee chairman, at the NYS Hall of Fame Award presentation noted, "George Good is a concerned, cooperative, and productive person, and he does it all with enthusiasm and a smile." Posthumously, in 2008, Thomas Corell, a leader in the landscape professions, commented,

"George listened, put things in perspective, analyzed the situation and supplied thoughtful, considered responses. His humanness and consideration were always in the forefront in his relationships with his industry contacts. He talked to people with respect for them and the work they do. They felt they had a friend at Cornell and a connection to the college through the professor at Cornell University with whom they could talk."

*A song to the oak, the brave old oak,
Who hath ruled in the greenwood long!
Then here's to the oak, the brave old oak,
Who stands in his pride alone!
And still flourish he, a hale green tree,
When a hundred years are gone!*
Henry Fothergill Chorley, from "The Brave Old Oak"

Thomas C. Weiler, Chairperson; Carl F. Gortzig, Joann Gruttadaurio