



Home Garden Seed Association Award Winners

The Home Garden Seed industry has long roots, going back to the mid 19th century. The United States, after all, is a nation of immigrants, and seeds brought from the homeland provided comfort, and a taste of home. Family-run companies grew vegetables, collected seeds, and sold them to local farmers and gardeners. Early in the 20th century the first wave of hybrid seeds became available beginning with cereal grains; in mid-century, hybrid tomatoes joined the many open-pollinated varieties on the pages of garden catalogs.

Despite the consolidation that is occurring in the seed business, as it is in every other business, one thing remains constant: it is an industry infused with passion. How could it be otherwise? The very act of breeding and distributing seeds of life is an act of passion.

The Home Garden Seed Association honors key people in the industry—people who have devoted their lives to making quality seed available to home gardeners—with awards. The following list of recipients is an illustrious and growing compendium of who's who in the seed industry.



Doug Oliphant (1935-2014) received the Founders' Award in 2009. As with many in the seed industry, he got his start in the family business. The Charles H. Lilly Seed Company first began selling garden products and seeds to gardeners in Oregon and beyond in 1885. From there Doug made his way into the packet printing part of the business, eventually forming his own company in 1992. Under his leadership Seedprint thrived, distributed its seed packets to companies all over the globe. Doug sold the business when he retired in 2008.

Together with Charles Hart of Charles Hart Seed Company and Mike Tait of Ferry-Morse Seed Company, Doug founded the Home Garden Seed Association (HGSA) in 2008. Interest in home gardening was on the rise, and the leaders of the close-knit home garden seed industry believed that it was important to offer robust support to gardeners that chose to grow vegetables and flowers from seed. So they took action.

Doug's colleagues remember him as an unfailingly positive, upbeat person who took a strong role in multiple arenas. In addition to his formative role at HGSA he took the lead in the American Seed Trade Association (ASTA), the National Garden Bureau (NGB), the Lake Oswego Chamber of Commerce, the Lake Oswego Adult Community Center, and WaterAfrica to name just a few.

Up until the time he died, Doug remained active in his community of Lake Oswego, and was widely recognized for making it a better place to live through his love of gardening and his regard for the people in his hometown. Visit this small community near Portland Oregon in summer and admire the hundreds of flower baskets, the work of more than 60 volunteers. Doug Oliphant helped start the Village Flower Basket Program over 25 years ago.



Jim Waltrip was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award in 2016, after spending literally a lifetime engaged in marketing seeds. Over the years he served on the boards of American Seed Trade Association (ASTA), the National Garden Bureau (NGB), and All America Selections (AAS). His first taste of the seed business came in 1960, when Northrup King hired him to help with shipping. It wasn't long before he had moved on to mail-order, and then wholesale sales. His next experience was at Gurney Seed & Nursery in Yankton, South Dakota, followed by a stint as the National Sales Manager at Petoseed in

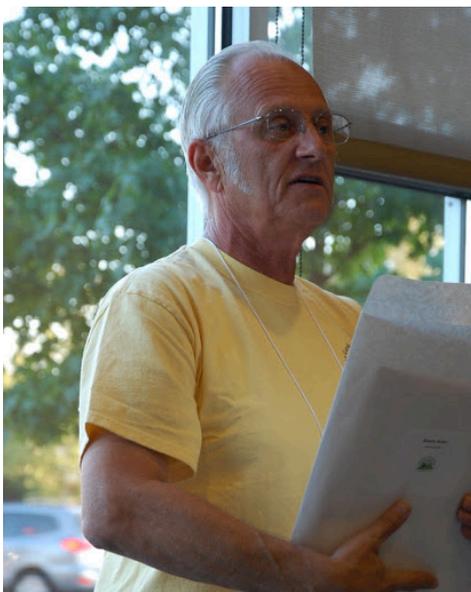
California, a leader in the burgeoning field of hybrid vegetable breeding. When he got an opportunity to rejoin Gurney Seed & Nursery in 1977, he moved his family back to Yankton, a town situated along the Missouri River, where they lived for the next 12 years.

"We had 100 people that did nothing but mail catalogs for well over a month," he recalled, adding that farmers and their wives were more than willing to fill these temporary jobs.

He rejoined Petoseed as Director of Wholesale Sales in 1988, where he forged relationships with mail-order and packet seed companies around the country. During that time he wrote *Jim's Vegetable Notebook*, a monthly bulletin that was enjoyed by readers for its product information interspersed with the jokes for which he had become well known.

Over the years, Jim also became known for his knack for naming vegetables. 'Beefeater' tomato, 'Healthmaster' Carrot, 'Big Bertha' pepper, 'King of Hearts' seedless watermelon, and many more are still sold today.

"In a span of 66 years we went from taking flight to putting a man on the moon. Yet, we are still producing and selling hybrid vegetables that are 67 years old," remarked Jim in his acceptance speech. Jim finished his career at Seminis Vegetable Seeds, prior to its acquisition by Monsanto. "Gardening is still in my blood," Jim said, adding that townhouse living is no deterrent. "I have 64 outdoor containers of flowers and vegetables including 20 tomato plants and 15 peppers ... I share the tomatoes with my neighbors. They love me during the tomato season."



Charlie Hart was given the Lifetime Service Award in 2017 in honor of his steadfast service to the Home Garden Seed Association. His business, The Chas. C. Hart Seed Company, is a founding member and remains an active participant. Hart's Seeds is also a founding member of the Atlantic Seed Association (ASA), an organization established in 1952 to address issues of seed companies throughout the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states. In addition, Charlie and his family have played an active role in American Seed Trade Association (ASTA), Connecticut Green Industries, Wethersfield Chamber of Commerce, and many other trade and marketing groups. The Chas. C. Hart Seed Company opened for business in Wethersfield, Connecticut in 1892, and remains in the hands of family members. "My father was one of four cousins who ran the business," Charlie explained. "Over the years, every kid in the Hart family has worked in the

company for some period of time.” A 4th generation owner, Charlie began by sweeping floors. During his 44 years with the company he learned every phase of the seed business, from bottom to top. Now retired, Charlie turned over the business to Jim Harris, a relative by marriage; Charlie’s two sons manage different parts of the business and his grandson also works there. Charlie’s hometown of Wethersfield, Connecticut is steeped in the seed tradition. Known as the “Cradle of American Seed Companies,” the town was home to seven different seed companies for a period of time in the 19th century. Good management, a strategy for succession, and a strong family work ethic (Hart’s grandfather and great uncle stayed active in the business into their 90s) enabled Hart’s to thrive as others consolidated or otherwise lost their identities. The Chas. Hart Seed Company continues to prosper in an increasingly regulated modern environment by following the same prescription that has made Charlie such a valuable asset to the Home Garden Seed Association: know the industry inside and out; keep abreast of regulations; and keep exceeding customers’ and colleagues’ expectations. Charlie succinctly summarizes, “We don’t worry about what *they* do. We worry about what *we* do.”