

Dr. Susan Brown - 2016 Wilder Medal Recipient

Dr. Susan Brown was recognized by the American Pomological Society with the Wilder Medal for her outstanding work in tree fruit breeding at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station (NYSAES) over 30 years. She has released four apple and 14 cherry cultivars during her career. Among these releases are ‘SnapDragon’ and ‘RubyFrost’ patented and trademarked cultivars which are being planted on 900 acres. These two cultivars have exceptional qualities and will make a major impact on the apple industry.

Dr. Brown grew up in East Haven Connecticut and received her B.S. degree in Plant Science in 1978 at the University of Connecticut. She received an MS in Horticulture in 1980 from Rutgers University with Drs. Fred Hough and Catherine Bailey, then a Ph.D. from the University of California, Davis in 1984 studying Genetics.

Susan’s father introduced her to the field of genetics with his passion for improving racing pigeons. Brown’s Mom had a “green thumb” and people visited her gardens from miles around. Brown merged those two trainings in her love of both plants and genetics.

Brown has been employed at Cornell University since October, 1985 moving through the ranks of assistant, associate and full professor. Her current research involves the genetics and identification of molecular markers of morphological, architectural, physiological, resistance and quality traits in apples. She joined with other collaborators to obtain USDA-AFRI funding for *Rosaceae* mapping research (www.RosBreed.org). This culmination of this work will significantly accelerate apple breeding and allow breeders to more easily pyramid genes for multiple desirable traits.

Brown has more than 60 peer-reviewed research publications in journals such as Ge-

netic Resources and Crop Evolution, Genomics, HortScience, Journal of the American Society for Horticultural Science, Molecular Breeding, International Journal of Food Properties, Plant Physiology, and the Journal of the American Pomological Society. She has also written key chapters for books including Handbook of Plant Breeding, Biotechnology in Flavor Production, Temperate Fruit Crop Breeding, Biotechnology of Fruit and Nut Crops and Apples: Botany, Production and Uses.

Besides her peer-reviewed scientific work, she has also written extensively for the fruit industry through extension and outreach publications including Compact Fruit Tree, New York Fruit Quarterly, Fruit Notes, and the Fruit Varieties Journal. She has made numerous presentations and guest lectures to both fruit industry groups, clubs, and other groups. Her work has been featured in numerous popular magazines including: Prevention magazine, National Geographic, Good Fruit Grower, American Fruit Grower, and the Wall Street Journal. She has also been interviewed twice on National Public Radio. Dr. Brown has been an active advisor of graduate students (7 M.S., 4, Ph.D.) and has hosted visiting scientists from Serbia, India, Italy, Japan and Korea.

Brown served as associate chair of the Department of Horticulture during a time of great change, and then was asked to serve as associate director and then director (and associate dean) of the NYSAES in 2015. During this time she has maintained a very active research program, has continued to mentor graduate students, and has connected with growers, legislators, consumers and school children.

Brown is widely respected among growers who appreciate her hard work and dedication to the industry. She played a vital role in the

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Wilder addressed the Society each year as president, and in one his last and most significant addresses, he shared his love of fruits with this statement: "Fruits are the overflow of nature's bounty; gems from the skies dropped down to beautify the earth, charm the sight, gratify the taste, and minister to the enjoyment of life; and the more we realize this, the more we shall appreciate the Divine goodness to us, and the duty of providing them for others." He often included poems in his addresses, and one of his last is presented here:

Like morning's first light, that gladdens the sight,

So may the best fruits spread over the earth.

And when we shall reach that still fairer land,

And round the life-tree in mercy shall stand,

May each pluck its fruit, and nevermore feel

The serpent's sharp tooth, once close at his heel.

Robert C. Winthrop, US Senator and Representative (Speaker of the House) of Massachusetts, said of Marshall Wilder: "He deserves grateful remembrance as long as a fine pear is relished or a brilliant bouquet admired."

Literature Cited and Bibliography

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nell and a grower cooperative to commercialize her apple selections.

Brown has received many honors and awards including the NY State Senate Woman of Distinction (2014), SUNY Chancellor's Award for Faculty Service (2013), CALS Alumni Association Outstanding Faculty Award (2012), a Horticulture Commendation from the Garden Club of America. (2009), and the Massachusetts Horticulture Society's Jackson Dawson Award (2005).

Brown has "rendered outstanding service

to horticulture in the area of pomology" for three decades, has been a longstanding member of the American Pomological Society (APS) and is recognized as an international leader in apple breeding and genetics. She delivered the keynote address at the APS annual meeting in 2015 in New Orleans, and was given the Wilder Medal on 11 Aug. 2016 at the annual meeting of APS in Atlanta, GA. She has cemented a legacy within the fruit industry and academy, and her contributions continue to grow.