

Awards to people

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PETER BARR MEMORIAL CUP 2019 AWARDED TO DR JOHN REED

Brian S Duncan

On the recommendation of the RHS Bulb Committee, the 2019 recipient of the Peter Barr Memorial Cup is Dr John R Reed from Niles, Michigan, USA. The Cup is awarded annually to someone who, in the Committee's opinion, 'has done good work of some kind in connection with daffodils'.

John Reed is certainly worthy of this prestigious International award. His love of daffodils knows no bounds and his achievements since he started breeding them in 1977 are recognised worldwide by daffodil growers and enthusiasts.

His approach to hybridising is to assemble the best cultivars from breeders around the world for his breeding programme, thereby ensuring a wide admixture of genes to create strong healthy plants suitable for his and other harsh growing conditions. John has sown thousands of seeds – indeed, many more than most breeders would dare attempt – covering all divisions and colour combinations but always with an eye to creating something new and to develop improvements in areas where such was much needed.

John's success can be measured in many ways; one being that he has created many fine cultivars, widely grown in the USA, which are becoming better known in other countries as stocks increase. He has registered an amazing 429 cultivars to date, mostly standard-sized daffodils in practically all divisions, but his repertoire also includes excellent intermediate and miniature-sized daffodils.

John has done great work in creating daffodils from pink lines of breeding with such intense colours in the coronas that they



John Reed at Oakwood (photo Cynthia Haef)

qualify to be registered as 'red'. Indeed he has registered the first known white and red trumpet daffodil 'Flaming Silk' through this line of breeding.

John also set about developing white and orange trumpet daffodils that were practically non-existent when he started. Since 2002 he has registered ten cultivars in this 1W-O of which the best known are probably 'Millennium Orange' and 'Tangerine Delight', both registered in 2007. I have used both in my own breeding programme and, as I await results, I look forward to obtaining the more recent 'Carrot Nose' 1W-O, registered 2010. John has also done much work in trying to improve yellow and pink flowers, especially split-corona types and 1W-Y bicolor trumpets that were still in need of improvement.

Daffodils are a passion with John Reed and his generosity is legendary. I doubt if there is a breeder of note worldwide who has not received gifts of bulbs or flowers that John considered might help develop their particular interests. John considers it an honour if other breeders use his flowers for further breeding and sharing bulbs and pollen is his priority.



'Tangerine Delight' 1W-O (photo Jason Delaney)



'Millennium Perfection' 1Y-Y (photo Tom Stettner)

Unlike most breeders John isn't competitive and rarely makes it to the shows – his health has curtailed travelling as widely as he might have wished; though I am pleased that he once visited us here in Co Tyrone and he has been to New Zealand and Australia. But if John does not make it to the shows his flowers certainly have done so with great success in winning top American Daffodil Society Gold and White ribbon awards. His winning flowers include 'Windy City' 1W-Y, 'Red Passion' 2W-R, 'Juergen' 1Y-Y, 'Louise Randall' 2W-W and 'Cinnamon Ring' 3W-WWO.

Friends in America have given me long lists of excellent flowers that could be listed if space permitted. When I asked which John's favourite flowers were, I was told that 'they are all under seedling number and haven't bloomed yet!' I can relate to that – as Alexander Pope said 'hope springs eternal...'

John's cultivation methods might horrify some growers. He has plenty of land and plants his bulbs out in rows with walking space between. He never applies fertiliser, there is no insect control and he mows the area twice a year to control weeds and grass so the flowers can be seen in springtime. It's very environmentally friendly with the bulbs getting the soil, wind, rain and sun that nature

provides. This Darwinian 'survival of the fittest' approach is much more relaxed than the fussing and coddling many of us practise.

John is confined to a wheelchair most of the time so digging bulbs could be a big problem. But he has many friends and each year enthusiasts from surrounding states converge on 2330 W. Bertrand Road, Niles, Michigan 49120 for what has become known as 'The BIG DIG'. This is a wonderfully symbiotic party – a mixture of fun, work, share, outdoor pursuit and evening partying. John gets his bulbs dug and the participants go home with bags full of bulbs for both personal use and to sell for their particular Garden Club funds. These donations help keep some clubs in operation.

Commercially John operates Oakwood Daffodils (you can find the catalogue through daffodilusa.org) but his priority has always been to 'spread pollen' rather than to attend to commercial considerations. In fact, he relies on others to photograph and show his best daffodils.

I know John Reed will appreciate this honour and the recognition of the RHS for all his good work in connection with daffodils and we wish him well for continued success in his daffodil-breeding activities.