

The annual SCHS Horticulturist of the Year banquet, honoring Tree of Life Nursery founder and plantsman Mike Evans, was held September 28 in Ayres Hall at the Los Angeles County Arboretum. Mike was selected as this year's HOTY recipient for his many contributions to horticulture in the past 40+ years as a nurseryman, a designer, a conservationist, for his work in community service and as an educator. He promotes an honest approach to California horticulture, specifically in authentic garden design using native plants, and is currently passing his knowledge on to the next generations as a professor in the horticulture program at Saddleback Community College in Mission Viejo.

Photo by Sabine Steinmetz



Before the presentation portion of the evening began, guests were able to bid on Silent Auction items donated for the event, and then treated to dinner and dessert, catered by the Peacock Cafe staff. After dinner, Steve Gerischer, SCHS Board Vice-President, introduced Richard Schulhof, the CEO of the Arboretum, who welcomed attendees before turning the mic over to Lili Singer, SCHS Board Member and former HOTY recipient.

Lili gave context to the selection of the venue by providing a brief history of Dr. Samuel Ayres, for whom the hall is named. Dr. Ayres made it his mission to see beautiful trees planted throughout Los Angeles, and was the person who found the property which is now the site of the Arboretum. (Please view video of event on the SCHS Facebook page for Lili's full description.) After concluding her talk, Lili, on behalf of the SCHS Board, presented Steve Gerischer with gifts for his past service as Board President. Steve in turn asked any past HOTY recipients in the audience to stand and be acknowledged, before inviting several people close to Mike Evans to speak about our honoree.

First at the podium was Mike's daughter, Debbie, who worked at the nursery for over 10 years, and before that, learned about plants and conservation at her father's side, even on family vacations. She spoke about Mike's work ethic, his passion for plants, and how generous he is and

always has been in giving of his time and knowledge to as many people as possible.

She was followed by Tree of Life General Manager, Laura Camp, who has worked with Mike for over 20 years. She spoke about the many organizations he has been involved with, and on behalf of herself and the nursery staff, she summed up his personal philosophy as "taking an ecological approach to horticulture and life." Laura also passed along a message from Mike's business partner, Jeff Bohn, who was unable to attend. Jeff's words about Mike were that "he makes you feel noticed, valued, cared for and loved."

The final speaker to honor Mike was his friend, Dan Songster, of the California Native Plant Society, Orange County Chapter, who has known Mike since the 1980s, when native plants were still difficult to obtain. He considers Tree of Life to be a cherished institution, and described Mike by quoting garden writer Allen Lacy, who wrote, "more loving and caring people can be found among gardeners than among any other group united by common interests."

Following these opening remarks, Steve Gerischer presented Mike with his HOTY award. Mike then had the floor and gave a presentation about how gardeners inspire one another, and how this can have a positive effect on younger generations and the future of horticulture.

Mike spoke about how we, as gardeners, can make connections with upcoming generations to foster a love of nature and horticulture. He tasked us with helping to bridge the gap between generations, and reach out to young people who might have the desire to become involved with plants but don't know where to begin. He explained that every healthy eco-system is multi-generational, and even proposed an app to inspire people by sharing stories and making horticulture cool. (Refer to online video for Mike's suggestions.) He acknowledged that with the advent of instant technology at everyone's fingertips, some among the older generations feel distanced from the tech-savvy youth. However, instead of letting this be an obstacle, he concluded his talk by specifically challenging us to inspire, *and to be inspired*, even through technology - thereby ultimately making lasting and positive connections for the future of the horticultural world.

🌿 Sabine Steinmetz

View video of award ceremony here: [www.facebook.com/socalhort](http://www.facebook.com/socalhort)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*This year's Silent Auction offered a beautiful selection of plants, pots, gift certificates and a variety of other donations for our guests to peruse and bid on most generously!*

*Many thanks to the following:*

**Businesses:** Asian Ceramics, Brandt Ceramics, El Nativo Growers, Glaze Fire, Go Get Em Tiger, Green Thumb Nursery, Jellybean Pottery, Los Angeles Natural History Museum, Matilija Nursery, Mildred E. Mathias Botanical Garden, Potted, Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, Roger's Gardens, Rolling Greens, Theodore Payne Foundation, Tree of Life Nursery, and Wild Wings Backyard Nature Store.

**Individuals:** Donna Marie Baker, Joan Citron, Shirley Marneus, Sandy Masuo, Greg Rubin & Lucy Warren, Lili Singer, Pat & Allen Steen and Dave Verity (via Debra Galliani & Laurel Woodley), as well as our other generous donors.

*We are grateful for every donation and all the participation, but unfortunately were unable to list every individual contribution.*

*Additionally, we would like to thank Nadia Balaz from the Arboretum Events Office and the Arboretum staff for their assistance, and Nicole's crew at the Peacock Café for catering another scrumptious dinner and dessert.*

*Finally, we appreciate the efforts of the SCHS board, with assistance from Erin Castillo who helped coordinate and document the event. Laura Bauer also deserves special recognition for the extra efforts she always puts into making the Silent Auction run smoothly. It takes many hours and much effort to plan, prep and put on the banquet each year, and we appreciate the many hands that worked hard to make it a success.*

*Thank you!*

## SHARING SECRETS

*In September we asked you about your favorite mulches, but we did not receive **any** responses!*

Since we did not have a regular monthly meeting at which to hand out cards, we offer you the option of answering *either* our question from September:

*What mulch(es) do you prefer using, and why?*

or October's query:

*Are you growing anything rare or unusual in your garden this fall?*

Since we're at the beginning of planting season, and/or readying to do a fall clean-up, your answers to either could be most useful for our members... 🌿