

On September 17, SCHS members and guests gathered to celebrate and honor our 2022 Horticulturist of the Year, Dave Fross, founder and president of Native Sons Nursery in Arroyo Grande. The annual award ceremony was back as a live event for the first time since 2019 and did not disappoint as a much-anticipated occasion.



Photo courtesy of Sandy Masuo

Carol Bornstein presenting 2022 HOTY award to Dave Fross.

The ceremony consisted of a special program by Fross which was preceded by tributes from various of his esteemed friends and associates (in person, via video and by proxy), including Ron Vanderhoff of Roger's Gardens, Randy Baldwin of San Marcos Growers (2017 SCHS HOTY), landscape designer and grass expert John Greenlee, UK horticulturist Neil Lucas of Knoll Gardens, landscape designer Bernard Trainor, author and plantswoman Judith Larner Lowry of Larner Seeds, renowned horticulturist Bart O'Brien currently of Regional Parks Botanic Garden (2005 SCHS HOTY) and rounded out by California native plant expert, horticulturist and author Carol Bornstein (2016 SCHS HOTY), who also currently serves on the SCHS board. Each shared personal thoughts and anecdotes, but all agreed that Fross was not only a highly-regarded native plant expert and grower, but also a gifted educator, mentor and communicator in the world of horticulture.

Fross' slide presentation entitled "Home Ground", reflected on his 43 years in a landscaping business dedicated to growing plants for the California landscape. While a graduate student at San Jose State University, his ultimate career path was heavily inspired by horticultural notables he became acquainted with, including Gerda Isenberg, Wayne Roderick, Cliff Schmidt, Ken Taylor, Carl Sharsmith and Lester Rowntree. He also mentioned the writings of geologist John Wesley Powell (*Report on the Arid Regions of the U.S. 1879*) and hydrologist Luna Leopold as influential. Fross credited them individually and collectively for sparking his idea to form a wholesale nursery specializing in plants native to Mediterranean climate regions of

the world. The idea became a reality in 1979 when Fross established Native Sons Nursery on a single acre along El Campo Road.

In the following years, Fross saw trends in horticulture come and go (such as the greenroof phase), but continued on his path of producing California native plants and select Mediterranean plants for the landscape trade and retail nurseries. He cited the *Eriogonum* and *Lavandula* families among his personal favorites to grow, as well as a number of grasses, including *Muhlenbergia capillaris*, *Bouteloua* 'Blonde Ambition' and *Sporobolus airoides*. These and other plants he grows have been chosen based on how well they can survive in the specific climatic conditions of California including aridity, drought and fire cycles. Fross has introduced many cultivars into the California nursery trade, and listed *Chondropetalum* 'El Campo', *Ceanothus* 'Antoinetta' and *Sesleria* 'Campo Azul', as some of the best plants grown in his fields. Currently Native Sons employs 37 people working on 14 acres, and in addition to his duties at the nursery, Fross spends time developing the 3.5-acre "Betty's Garden" refuge on a sandy hill down the road from the nursery, as well as working in his home garden.

✂ Sabine Steinmetz

*Our honoree declined to be videotaped, however an audio recording was made and is being archived.*



New SCHS board member Layla Valenzuela framed by the beautiful paper floral display she hand-made for the HOTY event.

*Thanks Layla!*

Photo courtesy of Aprille Curtis.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In addition to celebrating in person, we were also pleased to once again hold our popular Silent Auction – resulting in generous bids by members and guests on a wonderful selection of plants, garden books, tools and many other items! The SCHS appreciates the participation of bidders and donors alike in support of this annual fundraising event for the society.

*We are grateful to everyone and happily thank all who donated to the auction.*

(Donors listed in alphabetical order)

**Businesses:** Baker's Acres Succulents, California Botanic Garden, Descanso Gardens, Gottlieb Native Garden, Growing Works Nursery, Native Sons Growers, Santa Barbara Botanic Garden, Somis Succulent Specialties, Theodore Payne Foundation, VermisTerra and Wild Wings Ecology.

**Individuals:** Laura Bauer, Joan Citron, Debby Dunn, Steven Gerischer, Diane Marcussen, Shirley Marneus Estate, Sandy Masuo, Kathy Musial, Tom Spellman, Pat and Al Steen, Layla Valenzuela and Dave Verity Estate.

Many thanks also go to the Huntington staff for providing the venue and for their assistance in coordinating the evening, and to Dearmore Catering for preparing a delicious meal for us. Finally, we wish to express our appreciation to the SCHS board members for their efforts in planning the event, as well as promoting, prepping and putting on an inspiring and entertaining event.

*Thank you all so very much!*

## SCHS MONTHLY GARDEN SHARE

*October is here and with it the start of prime planting season!*

- Give your garden a "fall cleaning" including: pruning back shrubs, removing dead plants, decreasing irrigation and replenishing mulch.
- As soon as the cooler weather stabilizes, you can begin planting!
- Begin planting spring-flowering bulbs, wildflower seeds, CA natives and cool-season vegetables now.
- Pay attention to seasonal weather events such as expected heat days or Santa Ana winds, so you can prep ahead of time & protect your plants.

✂ Sabine Steinmetz