

2023 HOTY RECAP • EVENT PHOTOS • ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On October 21, the SCHS hosted our annual Horticulturist of the Year (HOTY) banquet in Ayres Hall at the Los Angeles County Arboretum, where we presented 2023 honoree Richard Schulhof with this year's award in recognition of his distinguished career and work in Southern California horticulture. The evening was a tribute not only to his leadership role as CEO of the Los Angeles County Arboretum, a position he held from 2009 until his recent retirement last spring, but also to the interpersonal connections he has made which have allowed his influence to reach beyond local geographic boundaries and impact multiple generations.

To begin the evening's main event, SCHS Vice-President and Secretary, Lili Singer (also a personal friend of Schulhof's), introduced four individuals who have known and worked with Schulhof for many years to reminisce and share some accolades. Margaret Page, a member of the Arboretum's Los Voluntarios since the 1970s, talked about working with Schulhof when she and her husband Dennis wanted to donate "a garden where visitors could reflect on quotes of nature and wisdom in a beautiful and contemplative space" within the Arboretum, resulting in the Garden of Quiet Reflection which opened in 2021. Page was followed by Schulhof's longtime work colleagues Gilbert Resendez, currently an Arboretum Honorary Trustee and formerly of Monrovia Nursery; Brad King, formerly president of the Southern

California Camellia Society; and Robin Sease, Director of Visitor Experience at the Arboretum, who has worked with Schulhof since his days at Descanso. They all spoke of him as a friend, leader, teacher and mentor, who values the people that make

up the teams which ultimately keep public gardens running. Following these speakers, Schulhof took the podium to a standing ovation and was presented with the 2023 HOTY award by SCHS President Laura Bauer. Thereafter he gave a presentation on "Adventures and Hijinks in Horticulture" reflecting on his 50-year career in horticulture.

Schulhof credits his grandfather with teaching him that hard work produces results, from when he was a teen assisting in his garden. This lesson led to a life-long love of working with plants. He holds a degree in landscape architecture from UC Berkeley where early influences included Garrett Eckbo, Russ Beatty and Wayne Roderick. He worked in L.A. area nurseries and completed internships at the Huntington Botanical Gardens and the Mildred E. Mathias Botanical Garden at UCLA, and was a fellow at Longwood Gardens in Pennsylvania and the Arnold Arboretum at Harvard, where he was writing grants when the opportunity arose to return to Southern California in 1996 to accept the position as executive director of Descanso Gardens. He stayed there until he was offered the position of CEO at the LA Arboretum in 2009.

During his tenure at the Arboretum, Schulhof worked with exceptional teams to create new gardens and programs, especially those that involve garden-based education, and he stated that "the Arboretum has never looked better." He thanked all of the workers and volunteers, but in particular cited the contributions of Tim Phillips, Jim Henrich, Leigh Adams, John Lasko and Frank McDonough.

With an eye to the future, Schulhof is looking forward to continuing "work" during his retirement, and plans to volunteer for organizations that are focused on native ecosystems, habitat preservation and particularly those that work to preserve outliers of biodiversity.

 Sabine Steinmetz

Please note: Our honoree requested that the presentation not be aired publicly as it was specifically tailored for the evening's audience. However, for those who could not attend, we are including some photos of the event to accompany our recap.



L-R: SCHS board members Lili Singer, Layla Valenzuela & Mardi Caruso. Bouquet courtesy of board member Aprille Curtis.



L-R: Former and current HOTY recipients Kathy Musial (2015), Lili Singer (1997), John Schoustra (2018), Richard Schulhof (2023) and Gilbert Resendez (2011).

Just desserts!



Unless otherwise credited, all photos are courtesy of SCHS member Alexiz Gomez.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & SPECIAL THANKS

The SCHS would like to acknowledge the hard work and planning that went into making this evening possible, particularly by the SCHS board. We would also like to thank the staff at the Arboretum for their assistance, and Jim Henrich for creating the incredible centerpieces using plant materials found on the Arboretum grounds. And the evening would not have been complete without our Silent Auction comprised of items donated by SCHS members and community supporters. At press time, we were still tabulating the results of the auction and will be thanking our donors in the December newsletter.



Photo by: Jill Vig

Jim Henrich's centerpiece with "icebreaker" fruits to get table conversations started...

List of plant materials follows.

Centerpiece floral arrangements:

Caryota mitis – fishtail palm, green inflorescences
Ceiba speciosa – pink floss silk tree flowers
Chamaerops humilis – Mediterranean fan palm leaves
Pistacia chinensis Sarah's Radiance® – Chinese pistache

Icebreaker fruits:

Brachychiton acerifolius – flame tree
Brachychiton rupestris – Queensland bottle tree
Firmiana simplex – Chinese parasol tree
Proboscidea louisianica – devil's claw
Uncarina decaryi – mousetrap tree