



IN MEMORIAM

Andrew T. Leiser
Professor of Environmental Horticulture, Emeritus
UC Davis
1923 - 2011

Andrew Leiser, who joined the faculty of the Department of Landscape Horticulture at the University of California, Davis, in 1964 and retired from the Department of Environmental Horticulture in 1991, died on May 16, 2011, at age 88.

Andy grew up in Bellingham, Washington, where his family operated a plant nursery, florist shop, and landscaping business. His experience in the family business, reinforced by his connection to his grandfather, who started the first commercial greenhouse in Tacoma, almost guaranteed that horticulture would play a central role in his life. After completing an undergraduate degree in chemistry, he shifted his academic focus to horticulture, getting a master's degree at Washington State University and a Ph.D. in Horticultural Science at UCLA. After graduating, he worked a few years at Purdue University, and then played a key role in development of MagAmp fertilizer for the W.R. Grace Company before coming to UC Davis. Through his work at Davis, Andy was particularly valued for his knowledge of North American plants. His practical knowledge of horticulture led colleagues to praise him as one of the finest plantsmen in California.

As a researcher, Andy preferred pragmatic objectives to theoretical ones. He was particularly interested in collecting and studying naturally occurring ecotypes of woody plants that might have horticultural potential. He was responsible for the introduction of ecotypes of bigleaf maple that grow well in the Central Valley, and his collection of western azalea from serpentine soils was the source for research efforts to develop azaleas that tolerate alkaline soils. He also conducted the first inventory of the extensive collection of trees in Sacramento's Capitol Park. He made important contributions to the horticultural literature, such as *An Annotated Checklist of Woody Ornamental Plants of California, Oregon and Washington* (with Elizabeth McClintock), and he pioneered many of the revegetation and slope stabilization practices used by government agencies, including California's Department of Transportation and Department of Water Resources. One of Andy's books, *Biotechnical Slope Protection and Erosion Control* (with Donald Gray), is widely used as a manual by planners and practitioners charged with slope stabilization.

Andy shared his time and knowledge generously with other horticulturists, and he was always willing to collaborate without expectation of reward. His collaboration with John Kemper (who was Dean of the College of Engineering) led to two pioneering papers on the distribution of stress in tree trunks, which have had substantial influence on tree staking practices. He was an enthusiastic teacher and a loyal and supportive mentor to graduate students, many of whom went on to make important contributions to horticulture. He was also active in several horticultural societies, serving as president of both the International Plant Propagators Society and the California Horticultural Society, and he was the botanical editor of the IPPS journals for many years.

Once set on a course, he was a committed and persistent bulldog in all of his endeavors. This remained true even after retirement from UC Davis. He continued to provide advice to agencies responsible for revegetation and wetland restoration, and he taught extension education courses on these topics throughout the country.

Andy is survived by his wife, Shirley, several children, and an impressive number of grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Colleagues, former students, and horticulturists throughout the West will sorely miss his broad knowledge of plants, as well as his commitment and enthusiasm.

Richard Evans
Wesley Hackett
James Harding
Warren Roberts