

## John and Gertrude Wister Award

At the ADS Board Meeting in September, 1980, a committee was appointed to study the possibility of creating an award for daffodils grown in gardens. In October, 1981, the following criteria were reported:

1. That the cultivar must be a good grower. It should have a floriferous habit (many bloom stalks).
2. It should have long lasting bloom with clean color, showy at a distance and reasonably sunfast.
3. Foliage should be vigorous, resistant to disease and frost damage.
4. Stem should be taller than foliage, strong and sturdy.
5. Bulb should be resistant to basal rot and not prone to splitting up. (Too rapid increase can be a problem, such as in a cultivar where the blooms deteriorate dramatically in size and substance after being down two or three years.)
6. Emphasis should be on garden performance, although it may be of show table quality.
7. Cultivar should be readily available.

In 1982, it was moved that the award be given only to American-bred daffodils. (I can't find when this was eliminated, but clearly it was.)

Beginning in 1983, 3 bulbs of a test cultivar were sent to approximately 35 volunteers for a 3-year test period after which a determination would be made on suitability for the Wister Award. This continued for several years, but volunteers either failed to report or dropped out of the program. In September, 1990, the Test Gardens and Wister Award Committee was abolished, and the work of that committee placed under the auspices of the Research, Health and Culture Committee. In April, 1991, the Chairman reported that the Board must decide if it wants to continue the Wister Award, and if so, how to proceed with the evaluation. It was suggested we start with the selection of 20 cultivars that grow well for Directors and other officers or other interested growers and go from there when we see the results. In September, 1991, the Chairman reported on the Board members' lists. It was the consensus of the Board that the Wister Award continue and that this committee bring future recommendations on how the Wister Award will be determined. In April, 1992, it was moved to give the Wister Award to 'Ice Follies.' (I couldn't find anything in the minutes about criteria after this, but apparently somewhere along the way we went back to the original criteria—minus the caveat that it be given only to American-bred cultivars.)



John C. Wister was a charter member of the ADS and the third recipient of its Gold Medal, in 1961.

The Arthur Hoyt Scott Horticultural Foundation was established at Swarthmore College in 1929 as a memorial to Arthur Hoyt Scott (1874-1927), an avid amateur gardener. Interest in establishing a horticultural center on the Swarthmore campus which focused on planting appropriate to Eastern Pennsylvania began in the mid 1920s with discussions between Scott and John C. Wister, a prominent local horticulturist. In 1925, Samuel C. Palmer, a classmate of Wister in the Class of 1895 and professor of botany at the College, submitted a plan to the Board of Managers to establish an arboretum on the campus. Discussions were held with the Swarthmore College President which resulted in approval of the plan in November 1925, but the project was delayed by lack of funding. Arthur Scott died in 1927, and in 1929 the Arthur Hoyt Scott Horticultural Foundation was established by his widow and other family members. The intention of the Foundation was to focus on plantings appropriate to Eastern Pennsylvania, creating a practical "garden of ideas" for amateur gardeners while at the same time improving the campus.

John C. Wister (1887-1982) was the author of four books: *The Iris*, *Lilac Culture*, *Bulbs for American Gardens*, and *Four Seasons in Your Garden*. He was the first to receive five major American horticultural awards: The Liberty Hyde Bailey Medal presented by the American Horticultural Council; the Scott Garden and Horticultural Award; the American Peony Society's A. P. Saunders Memorial Medal; the Honor and Achievement Award of the International Lilac Society; and the Gold Medal of The American Daffodil Society. The Brooklyn Botanic Garden presented him its Garden Medal in 1966, and that same year the Royal Horticultural Society dedicated its Daffodil and Tulip Yearbook to him, the first time an American had been so honored.

Wister was a landscape architect. He graduated from Harvard University and studied at the Harvard School of Landscape Architecture and the New Jersey Agricultural College. He served in Europe during WW I, and in his spare time visited gardens and leading horticulturists. He was secretary of the American Rose Society for many years, and was a member of some fifty horticultural societies and thirty scientific and conservation organizations. He was the first director of the Arthur Hoyt Horticultural Foundation, and designed and created the 240-acre public garden at Swarthmore College.



Personal recollection:

I didn't know John Wister personally, but after the first edition of *The Daffodil Journal* was published after I became editor, I got a 2-page handwritten letter from Mr. Wister which included the following:

"You don't know me . . . But this afternoon after reading the *Journal* which arrived this morning (all 60 pages of it) (every word) (Honest) I can't help writing to you. (After all you did stick your neck out on page 12.)"

"First I want to send thanks and congratulations . . . Volume 15 No. 1 is such a splendid job. And it was such a relief to me. I adore Roberta so I thought no one could follow her. But you have and have kept up the high standard, which I think more than anything else, I think has built up the Society. Now I see that the Society will continue to go ahead steadily."

You can imagine what kind of impact his letter made on a new editor. Enough of an impact that I still have his letter 31 years later! Made me wish I HAD known him.

Mary Lou Gripshover