

Curt Sell
2012 Inductee
Federation of Northwest Dahlia Growers Hall of Fame

Because of illness, Curt Sell is no longer a household name in the dahlia community, but he is the epitome of what a member of the Federation hall of fame should be. He has worked tirelessly to promote the dahlia among dahlia growers and introduced non-growers to the joys of dahlia raising. He, himself, has been an avid dahlia grower and an avid promoter of developing other growers as well. In 1984 he began by starting the Whatcom County Dahlia Society, a group which has grown very successful over the years. Then after retiring from teaching he began the Skagit Valley Dahlia Society. He served as president of WCDS in its early years and followed that by eight years as president of SVDS. And he was the driving force behind getting these two new organizations to affiliate with the Federation. He helped encourage the Vancouver Dahlia Society, which previously had modeled itself on the National Dahlia Society (England), to affiliate itself with the American Dahlia Society and then with the Federation. How many people do we know who have single-handedly started TWO dahlia societies and been a part of getting a third to align itself with the Federation?

Through the difficulty of establishing these societies, Curt diligently and unfailingly promoted dahlia information and interest in dahlias. He has always been more than willing to encourage and assist others in developing their knowledge and furthering their growing of dahlias. His skills gained as a teacher and his knowledge of dahlias has allowed Curt to be a very effective leader.

Curt availed himself of the opportunity to work closely with the late Dick Matthies, who hybridized the Fidalgo dahlias. He grew Dick's introductions and continued to hybridize his own, some of which carry the Goshen prefix. Curt is the one who recognized the potential of THISTLE as a seed parent and saved it from extinction. From his hobby grew the business of Pioneer Dahlias. People who visited the garden remember him as tending the dahlias while wearing his locally famous straw hat. He always had the time to visit and instruct the novice on growing techniques, answer questions, provide encouragement and always extolled the benefits of joining a focused dahlia organization. Unfortunately for his many customers and garden visitors, he had to discontinue the commercial aspect because of poor health.

Seeing a need to broaden opportunities to introduce people to growing dahlias, he contacted Washington State University about planting a display garden at their experimental extension garden in Mt. Vernon. This was a place where new varieties of agricultural crops are tested and it is visited by people from all over, anxious to see the new varieties of home garden and farm crops that they might find in the future. Curt also was the first to see the possibility of the current show site of the Skagit Valley Dahlia Society which has enabled the society to grow and prosper.

Curt Sell is deserving of recognition for all his hard work on behalf of the Federation, and for being instrumental in fostering the dahlia in the northwest corner of Washington and throughout the Pacific Northwest.

The Skagit Valley Dahlia Society nominates Curt Sell for the Federation Hall of Fame.