

**The 2006 Prairie Garden Award for Excellence**  
**Dr. Wilbert Ronald of Portage la Prairie, MB, Canada**  
by Linda Pearn

*The Prairie Garden Award for Excellence for 2006 was presented to two recipients – Dr. Wilbert Ronald and Ms. Barbara Laschkewitsch (article follows) – at a luncheon at Breezy Bend Country Club, Winnipeg, MB on Monday, August 28, 2006. This is the seventh year this Award has been given for Excellence in Horticulture on the Northern Great Plains.*

**W**ilbert Ronald's post-secondary education began at the University of Manitoba where he earned his B.Sc. and M.Sc. degrees in Plant Science, Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences. Wilbert ultimately earned his doctorate from the University of Minnesota in Plant Breeding. He began his research career at the Agriculture Canada Morden Experimental Farm.

As a research scientist with Agriculture Canada in Morden, Dr. Ronald initiated new programs in shade and shrub and perennial breeding that led to significant plant introductions. These introductions continue to impact the nursery industry to the value of millions of dollars. The following cultivars are of note: Fallgold Black Ash; Northern Blaze White Ash; Mancana Manchurian Ash; Northern Treasure and Northern Gem Hybrid Ash; Tower Aspen; Prairie Sky Poplar; Prairie Cascade Weeping Willow; Japanese Elm; and Miniglobe Honeysuckle. Dr. Ronald worked on numerous other tree species and shrubs including *Betula*, *Prunus*, fruit trees and lindens, leaving the door open for more cultivars from this research.

In 1982, Dr. Ronald bought Jeffries Nurseries in Portage la Prairie, MB which has become a major supplier of plants through innovative production methods and the introduction and supply of leading edge cultivars. Cultivars such as Goldrush Amur Cherry, Golden Cascade Linden, Harvest Gold Linden, Norlin Linden, Unity Sugar Maple and Early Gold Pear have been released from research done at Jeffries. The nursery now services over 300 customers in seven Canadian provinces and several northern U.S. states.

As a lily breeder, Dr. Ronald advanced the study of lilies, introduced significant lily cultivars and stimulated the support of lily research in Canada and throughout the world through the activities of the Morden Research Station program and the strengthening of the North American Lily Society (NALS) Research Trust Fund. Wilbert was a founding member of the Manitoba Regional Lily Society, an affiliate of NALS and was elected its first president in 1984. He began this work more than 25 years ago with Dr. Peter Ascher of the University of Minnesota. A total of 15 new cultivars have been released from this initiative. The North American Lily Society voted two of Dr. Ronald's lilies among the 10 most popular lilies, with one rated first place. Wilbert was guest editor of *The 1990 Prairie Garden* featuring 'Bulbs and Perennials.'

Wilbert has been the recipient of a number of awards in Canada and the United States. He received the Wodarz Award from the North Dakota State Horticultural Society in 2004 and the Norman Jay Coleman Award from the American Nursery and Landscape Association in 2003. In 2002 Wilbert received the Stevenson Commemorative Award from the Manitoba Horticultural Association. Wilbert was recognized for his contributions in plant breeding, selection of new plant introductions, propagation research, involvement in associations such as the North American Lily Society, and his role in providing leadership in the horticulture and nursery industry.

Dr. Ronald has given wide support to the nursery industry by active support of wholesale growers' groups, by assisting in promotional endeavours that resulted in the widely acclaimed nursery poster sets, by sponsoring field days, and by speaking to numerous trade conference and production days. During his career, Dr. Ronald has published more than 20 research publications, one book and more than 100 miscellaneous publications and presented numerous trade and public talks both as a researcher and business owner.

Congratulations Dr. Wilbert Ronald!



## The 2006 Prairie Garden Award for Excellence Barbara Laschkewitsch of Fargo, ND, USA

by Jean Pomo

*The Prairie Garden Award for Excellence for 2006 was presented to two recipients – Ms. Barbara Laschkewitsch and Dr. Wilbert Ronald (preceding article) – at a luncheon at Breezy Bend Country Club, Winnipeg, MB on Monday, August 28, 2006. This is the seventh year this Award has been given for Excellence in Horticulture on the Northern Great Plains.*

**B**arbara Laschkewitsch is employed by the North Dakota State University (NDSU), Plant Sciences in Fargo, North Dakota and works extensively with Dr. Ron Smith, Extension Agronomist, at the Dickinson REC horticultural site. She has many diverse responsibilities including the solicitation of entries, organization, coordination, management, data collection and reporting on annual and perennial flower performance at Fargo and some of the NDSU Research Extension Centers scattered throughout North Dakota.

A portion of Barb's appointment is in Extension. As a result, she makes presentations at Field Days and to garden groups throughout the State, and to groups outside North Dakota as well as to travellers from around the world who are visiting the campus. The results of her evaluations are used extensively by plant breeders, greenhouse operators, nurserymen and our stake holders.

In 2002 she was instrumental in the department receiving and then planting over 600 varieties of daylilies. The site is located directly west of the Northern Crop Science Lab, making this a major location in the North Central Region for this species. The trails are open to the public and it is common to see families, students and visitors from and around Fargo walking through the plots, notebook in hand. Barb also does the planning and maintenance of the horticultural display plots on the NDSU campus and frequently provides tours of the campus to visitors and local garden and flower groups.

Barb is responsible for teaching PLSC 177 'Floral Design.' The class consists of both lecture and lab. This class is extremely popular and she frequently is forced to limit enrollment. Her class evaluations have been very strong and positive with a lot of favourable comments about her teaching style and rapport with the students.

Barbara's latest project is as lead horticulturist in the development of the Horticultural Research and Demonstration Gardens being developed on the southwest corner of the campus. This site is expected to eventually be the main entrance to the campus. She has been instrumental in working with the student who is designing the gardens and is also involved in developing the garden.

In 2004 the portion of the garden that contains the largest historic daylily collection at any land grant university was dedicated. The collection is being expanded with more historic daylily as well as many varieties of the more common type.

Currently, Barb is doing variety identification of a large collection of Iris donated to NDSU. The Iris collection will eventually consist of 800 to 1000 different varieties. Other portions of the garden that are in the planning stages will be developed to include a Native American Garden, Rose Garden, Vegetable Demonstration Garden, a North Dakota Crops Origin Garden and a Prairie Demonstration Garden which will include native grasses and shrubs. Several other gardens are being considered as well as a class / meeting room where student organizations, garden clubs and extension classes can meet.

Barb has been given a tremendous responsibility by the NDSU which is basically the promotion of increasing the public's appreciation of horticulture and the beauty that can abound in the Northern Great Plains. She has a true love for and a dedication to horticulture; to make the world a more beautiful place. Barb has been awarded the "Gunkelman Award at NDSU," an award which is given annually to one person on campus who makes NDSU a better, happier place to work.

Barb and her husband Jim live in Fargo, North Dakota with their two sons Nicholas age 10 and Adam six. Barb was born and raised in Valley City, ND and received her University education at NDSU.

Congratulations Ms. Barb Laschkewitsch!

