

CSHS NEWSLETTER
November 1999

Merv Pritchard

AIC 2000 HONOURS AND AWARDS

Each year at the AIC Annual Conference, the organization recognizes individuals who are outstanding in their field of endeavour. Being recognized by our peers is the highest honour any of us can achieve. Members of the Canadian Society for Horticultural Science should consider nominations of its members for some of these awards. The award categories include:

- **AIC Fellowship**
 - * awarded to a member of a Member Organization of the AIC for professional distinction associated with outstanding accomplishment in any field of agriculture, with regional (if not national) recognition, with integrity and scholarship, and with breadth of knowledge, leadership and experience. To be nominated, candidates must be a members in good standing of an AIC Member Organization.

- **AIC Outstanding Young Agrologist Award**
 - * AIC offers this award to members of a Member Organization who are under forty (40) years of age as of January 31st of the year of nomination. The award recognizes outstanding achievement(s) and service to Agriculture in Canada.

- **Institute Recognition Award**
 - * the AIC Board of Directors may present a Recognition Award to a member or nonmember of a Member Organization who has rendered a special service to the Institute.

- **AIC International Recognition Award**
 - * this award is presented in recognition of professionals and organizations that have made, and continue to make, outstanding efforts to improve agriculture in the Developing World.

- **Grandly Medal**
 - * this medal is presented to a Canadian who has made a singular contribution to Canadian agriculture, the impact of which has been far-reaching and recognized within the past five years.

- **AIC Honorary Membership**
 - * this award is granted to an individual who is not a member of a Member Organization in recognition of distinction associated with outstanding and continuing accomplishment in or contribution to any field of Canadian agriculture

- **Canadian Agricultural Hall of Fame Association**

* the purpose of this award is to give recognition to and perpetuating the memories of persons who have made outstanding contributions to the agricultural industry. This award will consist of a portrait displayed in the Canadian Agricultural Hall of Fame.

Order of Canada

* AIC may submit nominations to the Order of Canada. The *Companion of the Order* is awarded for outstanding merit of the highest order, especially for service to Canada or to humanity at large. *The Medal of Service* is awarded to any person of merit of the highest in many different areas of service. The medal is intended to recognize excellence in all fields of endeavour in Canadian life.

Nomination forms for all awards are on the AIC web site: www.aic.ca/progs/awards/html or from Merv Pritchard, President, Canadian Society for Horticultural Science.

CSHS members wishing to make a nomination should contact a member of the CSHS Executive as soon as possible so the background information on the nominees can be prepared before the AIC deadline.

Deadline for all awards is **January 31, 2000** in the AIC office.

DR. JOHN PROCTOR NOMINATED AS ASSOCIATE MEMBER ORGANIZATION REPRESENTATIVE ON THE AIC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Congratulations to Dr. John Proctor of the Department of Plant Agriculture, University of Guelph who has recently been elected as the Associate Member Organization (AMO) representative to the AIC Board of Directors. John was nominated by CSHS and was elected by a vote of the AMO Presidents. We know John will do a superb job of representing the interests of not only CSHS, but of other Associate Member Organizations as well on the AIC Board of Directors. His appointment begins January 1, 2000 for a two-year term.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Merv Pritchard, President CSHS

Fed up with the "Frankenfood" debate? Tired of being asked your opinion by concerned consumers whether genetically modified food is safe to eat? Well get used to it! There is likely a long bumpy road ahead for food products developed from biotechnology.

As professional horticulturists, we are expected to have an informed opinion on the safety of fruits, vegetables, and other food products. We can recall instances where concerns about the safety of fruits and vegetables have had devastating effects on the producers and marketers of crops, contaminated grapes from Chile and Alar in apples for example. Opposition similar to consumer reaction in Europe toward genetically modified foods is growing in North America.

Consumers wishing to know the truth have been given little reason to support claims from either side of the debate on food safety. Opponents are asking Canadians to worry about the safety of genetically modified foods even though balancing risks versus benefits is a part of everyday life. Various organizations and scientists on the other hand are attempting to allay the fears of the public about biotechnology by assuring consumers that genetically modified foods are safe and will not harm the environment. They cite the regulations that are in place for rigorous testing of new products and the scientific reports which indicate there is no need for concern while dismissing opposition arguments as irrational and unscientific. Consumers must be educated to the many benefits of biotechnology respecting increased production, reduced pesticide use, and the role it plays in feeding an ever increasing world population. At the same time, the benefits of this new technology must be balanced with a truthful discussion of the potential risks. Each of us makes daily risk decisions but food safety issues can invoke irrational behavior in people.

Of growing concern to consumers is the suspicion that corporations do not necessarily have the general interests of the public in mind. Consolidation in the food production system has resulted in multinational companies having extraordinary influence over everyday life. The general public is also becoming suspicious of research and educational institutions which increasingly must rely on corporate sponsorship due to a decline in public funding.

So what role do we as professional horticulturists play in this debate? Is sitting silently on the issue of genetically modified organisms relinquishing our responsibility to provide informed, unbiased opinions? Perhaps we need to be more vocal in educating the public on the benefits and risks of these new technologies. Does the reliance on corporate sponsorship of public institutions impede our ability to provide unbiased information on scientific issues? Horticulturists must be prepared to offer reliable, objective information on a variety of biotechnology issues. Consumer backlash could cause mistrust of the scientific and educational communities and impact on their credibility concerning issues of human health and the environment.