

Gardeners Rewarded For Growing 'Extra Hardy' Plants

DUDLEY, Mass. — Winners have been announced in the Natural Food Institute's first "Extra Hardy Plant Contest." Each winner received \$100 plus a blue ribbon. All told, \$1,200 was awarded.

Darrell Rolerson of Dharma Farm in Islesboro, Maine, won \$100 for Sweet Cicely — named Best Vegetable. Sweet Cicely is one of the most disease resistant and hardiest of all vegetables, easily surviving -40°F. It produces three vegetables in one. Both leaves and seed are edible. The root, which averages 10 pounds, can be eaten fresh or dried, and will store for 10 years.

Jesse Schwartz of Living Tree Centre in Bolinas, Cal., won \$100 for listing Warren Pear, an unusual variety that will grow in the South. The tree was discovered in Mississippi by T.O. Warren of the North American Fruit Explorers. Warren Pear has withstood -27°.

Boston Mountain Nurseries of Mountainburg, Ark., won \$100 for carrying Tree Blackberry, a bush with extra large blackberries that grows so tall that a stepladder is often needed to harvest the fruit.

Gardener Versie Russell of Hattiesburg, Miss., who has grown flowers for over 50 years, won \$100 for growing Candy Lily, an unusual perennial that took nearly 40 years of research by Park Seed. The new flower is heat resistant, reportedly not bothered by insects or disease, and comes in red, yellow, blue, pink, and orange. Staghorn Fern, grown by Ken Opiat of Santa Barbara, Cal., was named Ornamental of the Year. The fern is generally insect-free, and provides years and years of carefree beauty.

Nut grower Ernest Galloway of Layton, Utah, won \$100 for growing "Utah Giant," an extra large Persian walnut that has withstood 30°F.

Thompson & Morgan Seed Company of Jackson, N.J., won \$100 for offering Juwarot Carrot, which contains twice as much Vitamin A as a normal carrot (249 mg per kilo). High Altitude Gardens of Ketchum, Idaho, won the Herb of the Year award with Sawtooth Mountain Mint, which survives 40° below zero.

Ken Stoller of Hicksville, Ohio, won \$100 for offering the lowest-priced grain — buckwheat at only 15 cents a pound.

Yong H. Kim of Cornell University received \$100 for supplying detailed information on a worm-resistant potato, a long-keeping tomato, a disease-resistant alfalfa, and a high-yielding wheat. R.E. Stevenson of the Alabama Experiment Station won an award for providing background on 15 unusual crops: winter productive fescue, three new Chinese chestnuts, a green-colored Southern pea, a disease resistant tomato, two watermelons, three cataloupe, and four plums.

Robert Lobitz of Paynesville, Minn., was named "Grower Of The Year." The Minnesota grower, who received \$100 and a blue ribbon, is one of the very few experimental gardeners in the United States. Due to an unusually wet season, Lobitz lost his entire pea crop of 270 varieties. Lobitz planted more than 2,000 varieties in 1986, including 100 grains. Also planted were potatoes, peas, soybeans, bush beans, corn, oats, barley, wheat, squash, watermelons and muskmelons. The Minnesota gardener evaluates crops for taste, yielding ability, and resistance to insects, disease, cold, heat, drought, and lodging. He looks for plants that have unusual colors.

The Extra Hardy Plant Contest will continue in 1987, and the Natural Food Institute will again offer \$1,000 (and a blue ribbon) for the best plant in 10 categories: Fruits, Flowers, Herbs, Ornamentals, Nuts, Vegetables, Grains, Ground Covers, Berries, and Any Plant Not Covered in Preceding Categories.

Money will also go to people who provide unusually detailed information, and to the Grower of the Year. Growers must tell the price and where a plant can be purchased. Snapshots can be helpful. The Natural Food Institute will also donate \$25 for seeds to a limited number of gardeners who agree to test 75 or more crops and report back on results.

Several dozen unusual plants are listed in the Institute's latest Wonder Crops, the nation's largest catalog dedicated to extra hardy plants. Growers with unusual plants can be listed free of charge. New entries in the 1987 edition include Vitamin A-rich carrots, a worm-resistant apple tree, a long-keeping tomato, disease resistant plums and alfalfa, a frost hardy Fava Bean, and a cold hardy lentil and nut tree. Valiant Grape has withstood temperatures of -40°. Candy Lily, a heat resistant flower, took 40 years to develop. Job's Tears provides cattle feed,



In observance of Ag Day, Berks County's Penn's Agri Women presented a basket of farm products to the first baby born in the county on March 21. Catherine Mary Hughes, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Hughes, R4 Fleetwood, was born at 12:19 a.m. at the Reading Hospital. She weighed in at 8 pounds 4 ounces.

Here, Agri Women Jean Beck and Nancy Seidel present the newborn and her parents with Berks County farm products donated by local farmers and agribusinesses.

stops erosion, and seldom needs weeding.

Free information on this year's "Extra Hardy Plant Contest" will be sent to any interested gardener,

along with a detailed "Plant Identification Form" and advice on why certain entries did not win.

If interested, contact the Natural Food Institute at PO Box 185WMB,

Dudley, MA 01570. The Institute will give \$100 for any Plant not listed in Wonder Crops that is as tough, reliable, and productive as Butternut Squash or Holland Greens.



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