

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Elizabeth Daly

703-838-5235

edaly@safnow.org

**Linda Laughner, Ph.D., Receives the Gold Medal Award & Brent Pemberton, Ph.D.
Receives the Alex Laurie Award at SAF Orlando 2022**

Alexandria, VA. — Sept. 15, 2022— On Sept. 8, 2022, during the Stars of the Industry Award Dinner at The Society of American Florists 137th Annual Convention, two exceptional floral researchers were recognized with top honors.



Linda Laughner, Ph.D., the world's premier breeder of snapdragons and the pioneer who made ethylene screening part of the breeding process for extended vase life, **received the 2022 Gold Medal Award**, which honors the originator or introducer of a widely distributed plant or flower that has become established as an outstanding product of significant horticultural and commercial value.



Brent Pemberton, Ph.D., professor of ornamental horticulture and plant physiology at Texas A&M University, whose research has improved roses' disease resistance, heat tolerance, postharvest longevity, and more, **received the 2022 Alex Laurie Award**. This award honors Alex Laurie, a renowned floriculture teacher and researcher at The Ohio State University and celebrates individuals who have made broad and long-lasting contributions to the advancement of floriculture studies.

About Linda Laughner, Ph.D.

Now retired, Linda has been the world's premier breeder of snapdragons and the pioneer who made ethylene screening part of the breeding process for extended vase life. Straight out of Penn State University in 1985, Linda began her career at PanAmerican Seed's Elburn, Illinois facility, as one of the company's first group of breeders to work on cut flowers at the new facility.

Linda took over PanAmerican Seed's snapdragon breeding from Fred Winkler, who developed the first F1 hybrid cut flower snapdragon in 1941. Her methodical backcross breeding made significant genetic improvements in stem and flower quality, vase life, and uniformity, which made it easier for growers to grow and schedule their crops. Because there were no snapdragon growers near the Elburn vicinity, Linda relocated to Santa Paula, California, to serve the cut flower growers more effectively.

Throughout her nearly 36-year career, she took a once 20-variety assortment to more than 50 varieties across four series, namely Potomac, Maryland, Monaco, and Cool. In Santa Paula, she also diversified into dianthus, developing both single-species and innovative interspecific hybrids into multiple series. Currently, dianthus as a class ranks among PanAmerican Seed's most important crops, thanks to Linda.

Osteospermum was another of her crowning achievements. Undeterred by the growing challenges and biotic stress on her breeding populations, she bred Serenity, Voltage, and the award-winning Blue Eyed Beauty Osteo varieties for BallFloraPlant, setting a new standard for color, performance, and heat tolerance in vegetative varieties. Following these introductions, she developed the Akila Osteo series from seed, initially with just basic colors of white, lavender, and purple. Today, this series is available in vibrant mixes and colors, including yellow, red, gold, and more.

About Brent Pemberton, Ph.D.

Brent, a recently retired professor of ornamental horticulture and plant physiology at Texas A&M University, is best known for his work with roses. After graduating from Texas Tech University and the University of Minnesota, Brent began his career with an emphasis on field garden rose production, making major contributions in the areas of propagation; temperature stress physiology; cultural practices, such as fertilization and spacing; and disease, weed, and nematode control. His work has helped growers understand the effects of digging time, lengths of cold storage, and the desiccation that occurs when re-establishing plants in containers for the flowering plant market.

Brent served Texas A&M's horticulture department since 1982, conducting research in support of the Texas nursery and landscape industry from his location at the Overton Research and Extension Center. For the past 12 years, he has chaired the Texas Superstar Program Executive Board, where he coordinated a faculty group that develop and evaluates new cultivars and educates the public on ornamental plants adapted to the Texas environment.

Although best known for his work with roses, Brent has conducted extensive research on bedding plants, providing field evaluations of new ornamental plant material for commercial companies located across the U.S. and Europe.

An active member of the American Society for Horticulture Science, Brent has served as a consulting editor for nine years and has been a member of the Ornamental Publication Award committee and the Annual Meeting Technical Program committee. He has also served as associate editor for the Encyclopedia of Rose Science.

Event photos will be available here: [SAF Photos's albums | Flickr](#)

About The Society of American Florists

The Society of American Florists is the association that connects and cultivates a thriving floral community through training, education, marketing resources and advocacy. Our vision: The power of flowers in every life. For more information, visit SAFNow.org.