ASHS Revamps Corporate Membership Program

For 2001, ASHS is offering a restructured corporate membership category. Corporate membership is available to any business firm, association, or organization interested in promoting horticultural research and education. The cost is modest ($300 per year), but the benefits are substantial, built around Society involvement, information, and savings on ASHS services and functions. John Abbott, Field R&D Manager of Novartis Crop Protection (W. Des Moines, Iowa) commented that “Corporate membership in ASHS affords our company many opportunities and benefits, not the least of which is direct interaction with horticultural researchers and their findings.”

Corporate members may become involved in Society operations. A representative of member organizations serves on the President’s Corporate Council, the industry voice for ASHS. Corporate members are eligible for involvement in ASHS Working Groups, including the Industry Division’s Intellectual Property Rights and Marketing and Economics groups. Corporate Members also have the right to vote and hold ASHS office; to serve on committees; and are eligible for election as ASHS Fellows.

ASHS Corporate Members automatically receive all the benefits of individual active members and some elective benefits also! Member organizations designate one individual to receive all these benefits, including the annual ASHS Membership Directory, and subscriptions to all three ASHS journals (normally elective benefits), and the monthly ASHS Newsletter, which is received by all members. “There is no other way for me to keep up-to-date on horticultural research,” said Paul Ecke, Jr. (Paul Ecke Ranch, Encinitas, Calif.).

ASHS Corporate Members save money, with discounted fees for exhibit registration at the Annual Conference (or on a conference registration fee for one person), and discounts on placing position openings in HortOpportunities. Members also receive a complimentary link to their Web site and a free highlighted listing on the Corporate Member page of the ASHS Membership Directory.

With ASHS Corporate Membership, diverse organizations can make a difference, and help raise their profile by joining ASHS in its effort to advance science and education in the horticultural community. As Fred Bliss, Director of Worldwide Breeding at Seminis Vegetable Seeds (Woodland, Calif.), remarked, “Interaction between the private and public sectors is vital as science becomes more specialized and costly. Participation in ASHS provides holistic information about horticultural issues and a forum for exchange of knowledge and ideas.”

New members signing up in 2000 receive several months of free membership, as corporate members are on a calendar-year renewal. For more information, request a brochure from Society headquarters, or visit the ASHS Web site (http://www.ashs.org).

Orchid Pest Targeted in Hawaii Studies

By Marcia Wood, USDA–ARS

Small snails that feast on roots of exotic Hawaiian orchids are the focus of new studies by Agricultural Research Service scientists in Hilo, Hawaii. The tiny mollusks (<i>Zonitoides arboreus</i>) are hard to detect and even harder to kill with commercial chemicals, according to ARS biologist Robert G. Hollingsworth.

Also called bush or orchid snails, they have bluish-grey bodies protected by yellow-brown, translucent shells. Their coloration, plus their small size (a full-grown adult is smaller than a fingernail), make the snails hard to find. In addition, they live and work independently, so they are harder to see than if they stayed in groups.

In a survey, Hollingsworth and colleague Kelvin T. Sewake of the Univ. of Hawaii found that about half of the growers that they queried in Hawaii complained that <i>Z. arboreus</i> costs them, on average, about $5000 a year in control expenses and lost sales. Even if only two or three snails are feeding on an orchid in a 4-inch pot, the marauding mollusks can eat up all of the surface roots in only a couple of months.

To combat the pest, Hollingsworth is trying to learn more about its biology. He’s working to build a large colony of wild snails for his tests of molluscicides that can be used to kill the snails without harming the orchids.

For more information, contact: Robert G. Hollingsworth, ARS U.S. Pacific Basin Agricultural Research Center, Hilo, Hawaii; tel. (808) 959-4349, fax (808) 959-4323, rholling@pbarc.ars.usda.gov.

Nominations Sought for ASHS Horticultural Landmark Award

by Paul E. Read, Chair
ASHS Horticultural Landmarks Selection Committee

The ASHS Horticultural Landmark award is considered “a prestigious premier award” designed to commemorate sites of horticultural accomplishments selected for historical, sci-
entific, environmental, and aesthetic value. Horticultural landmarks are sites of public appreciation and interest as well as a source of traditional pride for horticulturists worldwide. ASHS Horticultural Landmarks have included the gardens at Monticello; the Como Park Conservatory in St. Paul, Minn., awarded as part of the celebration at the 1999 ASHS Convention held in Minneapolis; and the soon-to-be recognized Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, west campus.

Nominations are requested for this important award from any interested ASHS member or other horticulturist who can suggest a potential ASHS Horticultural Landmark site. The site can be of historical, scientific, environmental, or aesthetic horticultural interest. Criteria for consideration include permanence of site; proper documentation of the horticultural collection, including origins, and underlying scientific basis for collections; monitoring and labeling of plants; educational programs; and accessibility to the public. Horticultural landmarks are recognized with a permanent plaque provided by ASHS. The award is funded by ASHS general funds and approved by the ASHS Board of Directors, following submission of the nomination to the ASHS Horticultural Landmarks Selection Committee and forwarding to the ASHS Board of Directors for their approval. Although such nominations can be located anywhere in North America, the ASHS Horticultural Landmarks Selection Committee is particularly interested in submissions that may be located near the site of upcoming ASHS Conferences. Such sites can be recognized with a suitable celebration and attendant publicity for ASHS in conjunction with the Conference.

**Tomatoes with Staying Power**
*By Tara Weaver-Missick, USDA–ARS*

Researchers with the Agricultural Research Service and Purdue University have found a way to slow down tomato ripening and improve tomatoes’ nutritional quality. If the season is right, a brilliant-red tomato may be sitting on the table of ARS plant physiologist Autar K. Mattoo. Although it looks like it’s just been just picked off the vine, it’s probably one of his genetically enhanced tomatoes that’s been sitting there for weeks. Mattoo and his collaborators developed a novel way of slowing down tomato ripening by introducing a yeast gene that controls this function in the fruit.

Living cells, including those of plants, contain genes that control many functions. Some genes are “turned on” only at a certain developmental stage or in response to an environmental cue. At other times, these genes are “turned off.” Scientists can use genetic engineering technology to modify these genes to turn them on or off at any particular time.

The new transgenic tomatoes have a lycopene content 2.5 times higher than non-transgenic tomatoes. Lycopene is a carotenoid that may aid in preventing early blindness in children, preventing cancer and enhancing cardiovascular health. Traditional breeding allows transfer of hundreds of genes in a relatively random manner—good or bad traits are sometimes haphazardly passed along to the new plant. With genetically enhanced plants, scientists know exactly what’s going into the plant and how to monitor it.

Before the new tomato can be made available as a food, it will undergo years of rigorous testing for health and environmental safety.

For more information, contact: Autar K. Mattoo, ARS Vegetable Laboratory, Beltsville, Md.; phone (301) 504-7380, fax (301) 504-5555, amattoo@asrr.arsusda.gov.

**Floriculture Industry and USDA Discuss Production Data Needs**
*By Ira Silvergleit and Lin Schmale, Society of American Florists (800.336.4743)*

Cooperation was the watchword as representatives from floriculture trade associations, academic institutions, data users, and data providers met with the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (USDA–NASS) to discuss modifications to that agency’s annual Commercial Floriculture Crops Survey. The goals of the all-day meeting, held in July, was to review the survey instrument and suggest modifications to ensure that in years to come the survey presents the most accurate picture of the fast-growing, fast-changing floral industry.

Suggested modifications to the survey, commonly referred to as the Floriculture Crops Summary, reflected changes in domestic production over the years in the relative predominance of the various segments, states surveyed, and crops to be tallied, along with the levels of detail required. The segments covered are cut flowers; bedding/garden plants; potted flowering plants; cut cultivated greens and foliage plants. The survey currently surveys the top 36 states and about 40 floriculture crops each year. The latest report showed the industry’s floriculture domestic production at $4.1 billion in 1999.

The 1999 Floriculture Crops Summary report is available free for downloading on the Internet at http://www.usda.gov/nass/ or for purchase in printed form from 1.800.999.6779.