

**PRESS RELEASE**  
**23 August 2017**

## **National Association of Plant Breeders Recognizes their Peers**

At its 2017 annual meeting, the National Association of Plant Breeders (NAPB) presented four awards in recognition of Lifetime Achievement, Plant Breeding Impact, Early Career Scientist, and Friends of Plant Breeding. In addition, three awards were presented to graduate students for the top posters at the conference. Hosted by the University of California in Davis CA from 7-10 Aug, the meeting was held in coordination with the annual meeting of the US Plant Breeding Coordinating Committee (PBCC).

### **Awardee Summary**

The 2017 NAPB awardees exemplify the very best in plant breeding research, education, outreach and leadership. They model persistent dedication and a passionate devotion to applying their plant breeding skills and technical excellence to promote food security, quality of life, and a sustainable future. They are committed to supporting the next generation of the plant breeding discipline. These outstanding professionals inspire plant breeders and scientists everywhere.

All four will present invited talks at the next NAPB/PBCC annual meeting, to be hosted by the University of Guelph, from 7-10 Aug in Guelph, Ontario, Canada.

### **Lifetime Achievement Award**

This award, recognizing distinguished long-term service to the plant breeding discipline through research, teaching, outreach, and leadership, was given to Dr. Robert E. Allan, a USDA Agricultural Research Service Research Geneticist and Professor of Crops and Soil Sciences at Washington State University, Pullman WA.

As highlighted by a colleague in his nomination package: “The advances in plant improvement Dr. Allan has achieved in his lifetime are remarkable, both for their basic scientific impact and for their enormous and enduring positive impact on the wheat production and processing industries throughout the world.”

Among his many achievements in wheat improvement, Allan showed the inheritance of semi dwarf height in the wheat cultivar Norin 10 was controlled by two genes insensitive to gibberellic acid. These genes became the foundation of the Green Revolution in wheat.

With coworkers, he made one of the earliest reports of a molecular marker that facilitated selection for disease resistance, showing an isozyme locus was closely linked to the important Pch1 gene for resistance to eyespot foot rot. Allan bred nine wheat

varieties, including Madsen, with resistance to eyespot foot rot that remained effective for 30 years. The need for chemical control of these diseases was greatly reduced, saving millions of dollars annually. He developed two multiline varieties that gave durable economic resistance to stripe, including the cultivar Rely. His varieties have been grown on several million wheat acres from 1971 to present.

Allan has served the wheat industry in many additional capacities, working with many wheat industry committees, including many years as secretary for the National Wheat Improvement Committee.

In 1952, Allan received a BS degree in Agriculture from Iowa State College, and Masters and PhD degrees from Kansas State College in 1956 and 1958. He served as a wheat geneticist for the USDA Agriculture Research Service in Pullman, WA from 1957 to 1996, working initially under the renowned wheat breeder, Orville Vogel.

In 1972, he became Research Leader of his Research Unit in Pullman. He held Adjunct Professorships at Washington State University and the University of Idaho, where he advised 24 graduate students. He was Coordinator of the western regional wheat testing program from 1981-1996. He authored or co-authored 152 publications, and developed and registered 155 genetic stocks.

Allan has been honored with a variety of professional awards, including: Distinguished Alumnus Award for Agricultural Research by Kansas State University in 1990, the USDA/ARS Technology Transfer Award in 1996, and the Genetics and Plant Breeding Award from the National Council of Commercial Plant Breeders in 1999. He is a Fellow in both the American Society of Agronomy and the Crop Science Society of America. After retiring in 1996, he authored a book on club wheat history and improvements. He also released his last variety, Coda, and has continued to contribute to the development of several additional varieties. Although fully retired, Bob Allan still experiments with wheat on his farm near Pullman, WA.

Describing Allan's credentials for the NAPB Lifetime Achievement Award, another plant breeding colleague pointed out, "Bob Allan is one of the most approachable and generous scientists I have had the privilege of interacting with. He has served as a leader, thoughtful listener, and advisor to the next generation of wheat geneticists and breeders."



Dr. Robert E. Allan, the 2017 recipient of the NAPB Lifetime Achievement Award in a photo from 1960 with the then newly released cultivar Gaines. Dr. Orville Vogel (l) and Allan (r) were both wheat breeders with the USDA Agricultural Research Service and Washington State University, Pullman WA.



Dr. Robert E. Allan, USDA-ARS Research Geneticist and 2017 recipient of the NAPB Lifetime Achievement Award from a 1988 cover of Wheat Life.

## **Plant Breeding Impact Award**

This award recognizes an individual in the public or private sector who has made significant advancements in the field of plant breeding, specifically in the area of applied variety and/or technology development. The 2017 recipient is Dr. John R. Clark, Distinguished Professor of Horticulture at the University of Arkansas.

As pointed out in his nomination package, Clark “projects the best of plant breeding through not only his outstanding new fruit cultivars but also leadership as a breeder who is a renowned horticulturist, plant biologist and academic.”

Since 1980 at the University of Arkansas, Clark has led research on blackberries, table grapes, wine/muscadine grapes, blueberries, and peaches/nectarines. He has also taught in the areas of plant breeding and fruit production and advises graduate and undergraduate students.

Clark has developed more than 50 cultivars of various fruits and has engaged colleagues in cooperative breeding activities throughout the United States and internationally as well. Along the way, as a colleague commented: “He has greatly internationalized the reach of the University of Arkansas fruit breeding program by establishing relationships with other public and private sector entities in Europe, North America, South America and Australia.”

Clark's innovative program in blackberry has led to cultivars with enhanced postharvest storage potential, primocane (fall) fruiting, and dwarf architecture. Similarly impactful on the global scale is the introduction unique flavor profiles in table grape, exemplified in the recent release, 'Cotton Candy'®, based on his work in the Arkansas program and cooperative breeding in California.

Intellectual property (IP) rights has been a major emphasis in his career. His releases have played a key role in program funding through royalties and agreements in testing and breeding with various entities. In fact, as indicated in his package, "Clark is recognized as a pioneer and innovator in this area of intellectual property management in public sector breeding programs. In addition to developing and implementing novel IP management practices in his program, he developed this as a personal transdisciplinary area of scholarly pursuit with collaborators in the fields of law and business, and led an active IP working group in the American Society for Horticultural Science (ASHS).

In addition to such academic achievements, Clark has an outstanding service record, actively serving on committees in the department, college, university, and professional societies. He served as President of the ASHS and President of the Southern Region of the Society for Horticultural Science. As a colleague remarked: "In both of these societies, he has been a change agent, improving both with his service."

Clark has received a range of awards, including Fellow of the ASHS, Wilder Medal of the American Pomological Society, distinguished alumnus of Mississippi State University, Spitze Land Grant University Faculty Award for Excellence (University of Arkansas), and Distinguished Service Award, North American Raspberry and Blackberry Association.

Summarizing Clark's qualifications for the Plant Breeding Impact Award, a colleague declared, "He has earned respect throughout his career for his cultivar releases, willingness to serve, intelligence and personality that allows him to work with anyone anywhere. His charisma, extreme dedication and incredible success as a plant breeder are unmatched."



Dr. John R. Clark, Distinguished Professor of Horticulture, University of Arkansas and recipient of the 2017 NAPB Impact Award.



Dr. John R. Clark, recipient of the 2017 NAPB Impact Award, - inspecting blackberry breeding

## Early Career Scientist Award

This award recognizes a scientist in early stages of their plant breeding career who exhibits the ability to establish strong research foundations, to interact with multi-disciplinary teams, and to participate in relevant professional societies.

The 2017 recipient of the NAPB Early Career Scientist Award is Dr. Robert Duncan, Associate Professor at the University of Manitoba and leader of the Brassica Breeding Program. In his nomination package, Duncan was termed “a magnet and energizer for teams. His can-do personality moves through the group and makes him a natural leader for large teams with big vision and the energy to accomplish to vision.”

Duncan was born and raised on a farm near Miami, Manitoba, Canada. His family’s operation was a certified seed production farm and he consequently became involved in agriculture and plant breeding at a very early age. He received a B.Sc. in Agronomy (2001) and his MS in Plant Pathology from the University of Manitoba (2003), in addition to completing an exchange program at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in Uppsala, Sweden. He then attended the University of California, Davis for his PhD (2009), focusing on breeding for disease resistance in dark red kidney bean.

Upon completion of his doctorate, he moved to Texas, where he served as an Assistant Professor and the State Wheat/Oilseed Specialist at Texas A&M University. In 2012, Duncan was recruited to the University of Manitoba to lead canola and rapeseed cultivar development, concentrating on improvements in seed quality, disease resistance and several agronomic traits.

Duncan has already established a very strong educational component to his program, teaching Genetics, Advanced Plant Breeding and Cereal and Oilseed Production Practices. He was selected as the 2015/16 Teacher of the Year within the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences and won both the University of Manitoba Merit Award for Teaching and the Teaching Award of Merit from the North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture.

He has advised or co-advised 14 graduate students and his students have won 19 local, national or international awards since 2013. Of his last four graduate students to complete their degrees, three are plant breeders within industry and the fourth is in an assistant professor role.

Endorsing Duncan’s outstanding qualifications for the NAPB Early Career Impact Award, one of his students indicated: “Over the past three years Dr. Duncan has been an incredible teacher and mentor to me. As a teacher, he is confident, well-spoken and encourages class participation. As a mentor, he has the ability to inspire passion in those he supervises. Dr. Duncan has helped me discover my own wisdom by encouraging me to work hard towards my end goals.”



Dr. Robert W. Duncan, Associate Professor, University of Manitoba, recipient of the NAPB 2017 Early Career Scientist Award.



Dr. Robert W. Duncan, Associate Professor, University of Manitoba and 2017 Recipient of the NAPB Early Career Scientist Award, highlights his canola and rapeseed cultivar development test plots.

### **Friends of Plant Breeding Award**

This award was created to honor individuals whose career has not been involved in an active plant breeding program, but who, through their professional activities, have contributed significantly to the advancement of the plant breeding discipline.

This first recipient of this special merit award is Dr. Ann Marie Thro, National Program Leader for Plant Breeding and Genetic Resources at the National Institute for Food and Agriculture in the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Commenting on her tenacity and dedication, one NAPB member said: “Ann Marie Thro is a longtime, enduring friend of plant breeding. Her background and experience have provided the foundation to be an effective spokesperson for plant breeding issues in academic and business groups as well as governmental, commercial and consumer settings”

Thro provided consistent and visionary leadership in the formation of the Plant Breeding Coordinating Committee, a multi-state committee within the federal-state/land grant university partnership, and the multi-agency internal USDA Plant Breeding Working Group. Similarly, as an early and enthusiastic proponent of a professional plant breeding society in the U.S., Thro played a critical role in the creation and growth of the NAPB.

In addition to her national and international efforts to justify and secure additional funding for education of plant breeders and research support for basic and applied breeding, Thro has championed the cause for plant genetic resources, demonstrated her merit as the first recipient of the NAPB Friends of Plant Breeding Award.

As an NAPB colleague observed: “Thro has tirelessly articulated the value of and need for conservation, curation and utilization of germplasm for crop improvement. Few people have a longer and more effective record of documenting declining numbers of plant breeders in the U.S. and globally, and working to reverse that trend.”

Thro’s advanced degrees are in Plant Breeding and Genetics from Iowa State University; with undergraduate degrees in Agronomy from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and History and Languages from Bryn Mawr College. She is currently serving as Sr. Advisor for Plant Health, Production, and Products in the Office of the Chief Scientist, USDA.



Dr. Ann Marie Thro, 2017 recipient of the NAPB Friends of Plant Breeding Award. Thro is National Program Leader for plant breeding and genetic resources in the National Institute for Food and Agriculture, United States Department of Agriculture.

## Poster Awardees



The top poster awards went to: 1<sup>st</sup> place, Stephanie Fong (right), Rutgers University for her poster entitled “Loci impacting malic and citric acid content in cranberry fruit”; 2<sup>nd</sup> place, Daljit Singh (center), Kansas State University, for his poster entitled “Genetic analysis of crop lodging and multi-spectral traits in CIMMYT wheat”; and 3<sup>rd</sup> place, Mohammad Rahman (left), Kansas State University, for his poster entitled “Scope of wheat production and improvement in Bangladesh”. We congratulate the awardees for their success.

### About the NAPB and PBCC

The NAPB [<http://www.plantbreeding.org>] is unique organization in the U.S., bringing together public and private sector plant breeders to share technical information, improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their programs, develop the next generation of scientists, disseminate information about plant breeding, and advocate for a cohesive national plant breeding agenda. The PBCC provides a forum to discuss and educate the public about Plant Breeding. Plant breeders develop new crop varieties that promote food security, quality of life, and a sustainable future.

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