

AHS 80th Anniversary: 1922–2002

From the President

by Linda D. Hallman

THIS YEAR marks the 80th anniversary of the founding of the American Horticultural Society, and we will celebrate this milestone in each issue of *The American Gardener* by taking a look back at the highlights of the first 80 years.



It has been my privilege to serve as President and Chief Executive Officer of the Society for five of those years now, and it is inspiring for me to look back at the Society's achievements and the long list of nationally prominent horticulturists and other scientists who have been associated with AHS.

The Society has experienced many changes over those years, but throughout our history we have served as a catalyst to advance horticultural knowledge with groundbreaking ideas and programs for American gardeners and gardening organizations. By fostering and extolling horticultural excellence, our goal has been to stimulate best practices in gardening.

As we reflect on the Society's history, it's also a good time to assess the challenges and opportunities we face today and in the future. The work of AHS—and the thousands of gardeners we serve—has never been more important. It's horticulture that produces vegetables and fruits to nourish our bodies...and horticulture that offers trees and shrubs to mark our paths and inspire our minds...and horticulture that yields flower upon flower to please eyes and nurture souls. Indeed, it is horticulture that sustains human life in so many fundamental ways. Happy Anniversary AHS!

~ AHS Retrospective ~ AHS Retrospective ~ AHS Retrospective ~

The Formative Years (1922–1938)

The American Horticultural Society as we know it today is a combination of several horticultural groups that merged over a period of decades to form one organization dedicated to improving horticulture in America both as a science and an art form. The original founding organizations were the American Horticultural Society (AHS) and the National Horticultural Society (NHS).

AHS and NHS were founded concurrently in 1922 in Washington, D.C., and Henning, Minnesota, respectively. AHS was formed by a group of dedicated professional and amateur horticulturists and plant scientists who met monthly to hear a lecture on horticulture.

One of the prime organizers of NHS was Hamilton P. Traub, who conceptualized the idea of a national organization in a series of articles published in the *Flower Grower* magazine. Traub organized meetings among people with similar interests to his own, which led to the establishment of NHS in 1922. Traub became the first editor of *The National Horticultural Magazine*, which has evolved over the years into *The American Gardener*.

The Merger

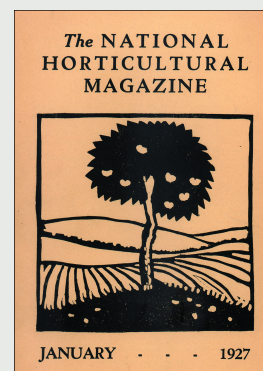
The union of the Minnesota and the Washington, D.C., groups had been planned shortly after each was formed in 1922. Merger committees were formed by both organizations and, after lengthy debate, the organizations formally united on June 15, 1926. The hybrid organization retained the name American Horticultural Society, with headquarters in Washington, D.C. The first president was Furman L. Mumford, who presided over a membership that stood at 500 people.

The Magazine

One of the most important results of the merger was the retention of *The National Horticultural Magazine* in a completely new format, which resumed publication in 1926. Benjamin Y. Morrison, an assistant to David Fairchild at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) at the time, took over as chairman of the Editorial Committee. A legendary plantsman, Morrison is perhaps best known for developing the Glenn Dale hybrid azalea series.

Almost immediately, the magazine acquired Morrison's unique style and format, which endured with little change for the next 27 years. Morrison excelled as an editor, writer, and a horticultural illustrator. The prints he created for the cover (right), were the magazine's early hallmark.

In 1934, Society headquarters were set up in the Washington Loan and Trust Building, where Morrison carried on his volunteer work as editor in his off hours from his official duties with USDA. Under Morrison, the magazine soon attracted the leading horticultural writers of the country. He maintained exacting standards for the magazine, and it was this perfectionism that set the magazine apart from other American horticultural publications of the time.



The January 1927 issue of the magazine