

THE 2010 TOM DODD AWARD CITATION

The criteria on which the Awards Committee makes its selection from written nominations are: (1) conservation of native vegetation *in situ*, or (2) studying and promoting native vegetation, or (3) understanding the propagation and cultivation requirements of native plants and using native plants in a diversity of natural and designed landscapes. There are many people in the region and across the nation and the world who qualify, and it is up to you, the participants in the Cullowhee Conference, and your friends and acquaintances, to bring them to the attention of the committee.

There is a long standing tradition that the award is kept as secret as possible from the recipient for as long as possible. Sometimes preserving anonymity has required subterfuge and even falsehoods. This year, I'm going to abandon the effort at anonymity because it requires a certain amount of beating about the bush. Instead of hearing my prattle, I want you to hear more of the profoundly laudatory comments supporting this year's nomination.

I have read the sheaf of letters supporting the nomination multiple times, and have fretted over how to pick and choose excerpts that would preserve the depth of feeling of the contributor and not lose context. I failed, and have fallen back to this. I will read most of the letter of nomination because it is eloquent beyond my abilities, and will choose from several letters supporting the nomination.

The letter of nomination comes from Kevin Redding, the Executive Director of the Piedmont Land Conservancy in Greensboro, North Carolina.

“Dear Awards Committee:

I am pleased to nominate Emily H. Allen for the Tom Dodd, Jr. Award of Excellence. I believe she exemplifies the criteria that the award seeks to recognize.

Five generations of Emily Allen's family have lived in the Bethabara area of Winston Salem, and when she inherited her land more than 50 years ago, Emily envisioned a conventional garden full of showy roses and petunias. Somehow that wasn't meant to be.

After she and her husband, O.G., cleared away the waist-deep tangle of Japanese honeysuckle and poison ivy from the woods behind their house, Emily spotted a beautiful, unfamiliar flower that captivated her. She took it to the local office of the N.C. Garden Club Council where, as luck would have it, she met May Reade Plaster. Mrs. Plaster, who at that time was Winston-Salem's “wildflower guru,” identified Emily's flower as showy orchis and told her, “You must have a very rich, special place.” Emily was hooked and Mrs. Plaster acquired a protégé.

That chance meeting began a friendship that would shape Emily's life from that moment forward and set her on a course to learn everything she can about the biology and ecological habits of native plants. To celebrate her 50th birthday, Emily enrolled in a vascular taxonomy course at Wake Forest University,

which opened her eyes to the intricate structure and functions of plants. It also began a lasting relationship with the university's biology department and its biological honor society Beta Beta Beta. Tri-Beta members visit her garden each year to volunteer their services and learn about native plants and habitats.

As Emily's knowledge increased, her garden grew and evolved along with her. In the midst of Winston-Salem on her five-and-a-half acre urban garden, Emily created a hidden woodland wonderland which is one of the few places in Piedmont North Carolina where one can get the feeling of a rich cove forest. It is comprised of over 500 species of native trees, shrubs, ferns and wildflowers, including 28 species of eastern North American trilliums. Some of the plants occurred naturally on the property, while many others were rescued from construction sites. Through the years, Emily kept meticulous records on the plants, their provenance and her observations of their habits.

Emily's garden serves many purposes. To promote appreciation of native plants, she has made good use of her garden to educate visitors such as garden clubs, college taxonomy classes, school groups and Master Gardeners. She has also been generous with her plants, giving them away not only to fellow enthusiasts but also to various public gardens so that specimens do not have to be collected from the wild. Photographers and artists enjoy the garden for its aesthetic appeal and easy access to a broad variety of subjects in one location. Also throughout the garden, visitors enjoy the well-placed whimsical pieces of garden art that reflect her wit and humor.

Emily's garden has been featured in publications including *Better Homes and Garden* and *Wildflowers of the Southern Appalachians*. Many of Anne Hallowell's illustrations in "Fern Finder" were done from live material she collected from Emily's garden. Visitors have come from all over the United States and the world. Emily entertains them with medicinal and botanical folklore and animated anecdotes, but always strives to convey botanical knowledge.

In 2000, Emily donated a conservation easement on her garden to Piedmont Land Conservancy. Her hope is to ensure that others will always have the opportunity to enjoy and learn from her garden, now known as the Emily H. Allen Wildflower Preserve, Friendship Garden. "Here is something greater than I am," she says. "It's a legacy that I can pass on to others."

In recent years, as Emily has become unable to care for the garden without help, a volunteer group, now numbering over two dozen, was formed in conjunction with Piedmont Land Conservancy to help maintain the garden, prevent incursions of exotic invasive plants, and lead tours.

So, in recognition of her dedication to the preservation of wildflowers and her efforts to educate and promote appreciation of them in others, Piedmont Land Conservancy, along with the authors of the accompanying recommendation letters,

respectfully submits this nomination of Emily H. Allen for the Tom Dodd, Jr. Award of Excellence.

Respectfully submitted,
/s/ Kevin Redding
Executive Director
Piedmont Land Conservancy”

An earlier recipient of the Dodd Award, C. Ritchie Bell, former Director of the North Carolina Botanical Garden, had this to say, in part, concerning the nomination: “The binomial system of nomenclature allows us to sum up in two words a multitude of variation in shape, size, color and many other features of a plant based on a designated “type specimen.” I would like to suggest that we set up a similar classification for native plant gardens—and designate the Emily Allen Garden as the “type” against which all native plant gardens are compared and against which they are rated.”

Another earlier recipient of the Dodd Award, Ken Moore former Assistant Director of the North Carolina Botanical Garden, had more to say than I have time to repeat (not surprising to you who know him). In part, “...(S)he seems always to have been present as a student wanting to learn more and as a determined champion in pursuit of native plant conservation. ... Emily began appearing in my early wildflower classes and field trips. She was always close to the front wanting to know every detail about every plant we spotted. Emily’s persistence in wanting to know about every plant intrigued me. In just a few years I found myself responding to Emily that she knew as much about the plants as I did. In fact, her pursuit of plant identification surpassed mine in several specifics. When it came to ferns, I was occasionally embarrassed that she was the one teaching me, and her pursuit of the distinguishing characteristics of the variations within the Trilliums and evergreen Hexastylis left me in her shadow. ... She observed, studied and became a native plant expert equal to the professionals. ... She did more. She studied plant ecology and applied that to her own home property ... where she amassed a staggering number of species and variations in species of native plants”

From Peter White, the current Director of the North Carolina Botanical Garden, “... How many times have I wished our own woodland gardens at the North Carolina Botanical Garden were as diverse and beautiful as hers! ... (S)he is not so much a disciple as a pioneer in her own right.”

From Tom Harville, the current president of the North Carolina Native plant Society, “... Emily is an extraordinary woman of charm, wit, and intelligence.”

It just goes on and on.

One writer sums it up succinctly. “Emily Allen is well qualified to receive the Tom Dodd, Jr. Award of Excellence. She has excelled in three of the activities that exemplify dedicated individuals in the native plant movement: studying and promoting the understanding of our native flora, building expertise in the propagation/cultivation of native plants, and using native plants in a natural landscape.”

It is with respect, appreciation, admiration, and great joy that the Awards Committee welcomes Emily Allen to the Cullowhee Conference and presents her the fully deserved Tom Dodd, Jr. Award of Excellence.

The plaque reads as follows:

Twenty-fourth Annual

TOM DODD, JR.

AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

Presented to

Emily H. Allen

**A LOVING HEART, A WILLING MIND, AND A
GENEROUS SPIRIT**

A PASSIONATE PRIVATE CITIZEN

A TIRELESS PUBLIC SERVANT

**“AN EXTRAORDINARY WOMAN OF
CHARM, WIT, AND INTELLIGENCE”**

**“NOT SO MUCH A DISCIPLE AS A PIONEER
IN HER OWN RIGHT”**

**“GARDENER, EDUCATOR, AND ADVOCATE
FOR NATIVE PLANTS”**

Presented by the Cullowhee Native Plant Conference
2010

For the Tom Dodd, Jr. Award of Excellence
committee:

Dick Bir

J. Leo Collins

Edward E. C. Clebsch, Chair