

Useful Wild Plants, Inc.

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CHEATHAM HONORED BY GARDEN CLUB OF AMERICA

Scooter Cheatham, architect, community and regional planner, and president and founder of the non-profit organization Useful Wild Plants, Inc., has been selected to receive the prestigious Horticulture Commendation award at the Garden Club of America Zone IX (Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, Tennessee, Mississippi) convention on April 27 in Little Rock, Arkansas.

The Horticulture Commendation is awarded to individuals or organizations who are not members of the Garden Club of America but who have made a significant contribution to horticulture.

Cheatham was nominated for the award by the Garden Club of Houston, one of the oldest and largest clubs in Zone IX states, for his extensive research, writing, and illustrations on the usefulness of plants and the importance of conserving and protecting these natural resources.

Over four decades ago Cheatham, a native of Cuero, Texas, anticipated the eventual decline of non-renewable petrochemical resources. Believing that a re-investment in the thousands of little known and inadequately researched wild plants would be the inevitable solution for a permanently renewable economy, he founded the Useful Wild Plants Project in 1971.

Based in Austin, Texas, the Useful Wild Plants Project is the first comprehensive economic botany study for a major world region. It offers, from research on native and naturalized Texas plants, the prospect of an inexhaustible future economy from new foods, medicines, and commodities as well as the means -- given the wisdom -- to conserve and protect those resources.

The work reaches back to ancient times when prehistoric peoples subsisted predominantly on plants and reaches forward to the most recent scientific discoveries in medicine, nutrition, genetics, cultivation, and phytochemistry. It integrates the related sciences, engages in applied research, draws on the principals' first hand research and experimentation, and brings in interviews with authorities in relevant fields as well as hundreds of informant accounts. As a prototype, the project is the first step in producing a global-scale information base on the world's plants. It will have long-term application to the problems that are confronting the country. It will be of extreme importance as we try to feed the world.

"The greatest service which can be rendered any country is to add a useful plant to its culture." Thomas Jefferson

The first manifestation of the project is a massive multi-volume publication entitled *The Useful Wild Plants of Texas, the Southeastern and Southwestern United States, the Southern Plains, and Northern Mexico*. The project heralds the plant kingdom as a source for myriad foods, medicines, and commodities of every kind yet to be discovered and developed and the vital ecological roles these plants have for native landscaping and protection and restoration of native habitats.

The publication is an unparalleled treatment of the botanical resources of the southern U.S. and northern Mexico. Treatments covering the approximately 4,000 species will be completed and published as funding becomes available. Four volumes have been published.

Previous recipients of the Horticulture Commendation include plant explorer and horticulturist Lynn Lowrey of Houston, who Cheatham calls “the father of native landscaping in Texas” and to whom Volume 2 of *Useful Wild Plants...* was dedicated. Contributions from the Garden Club of Houston to UWP have helped further the work on the Useful Wild Plants Project, particularly photographic and field work in Houston and Harris County and southeastern Texas.

For more on the Useful Wild Plants Project and information about purchasing the volumes, call 512.928.4441 or visit www.usefulwildplants.org.