

THE ICPS PRESENTS
THE ICPS LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD TO
DR. LARRY MELLICHAMP

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The ICPS is honored to congratulate Dr. Larry Mellichamp with its Lifetime Achievement Award, in gratitude for his outstanding and continuous contributions and achievements to carnivorous plants and Sarraceniology, and for his influential, unceasing, and sincere efforts to bring his passion for CPs and all rare plants to others over the span of his long and admirable career.

Dr. Mellichamp is a University of North Carolina at Charlotte Professor Emeritus of Botany and Horticulture and former director of its Botanical Gardens. He has been a core member of ICPS since the early 1970s and CPN editor from 1977-1987. He has been engrossed in *Sarracenia* since the 1960s and is renowned as a leading authority on that genus in both botany and horticulture for over 50 years. Larry, retired from UNCC in 2014 and resides in Charlotte with his wife, Dr. Audrey Mellichamp, also a botanist.



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The award was suggested to the ICPS Board of Directors in summer 2020 by Paula Gross, a close colleague of Larry's and fellow horticulturalist and botanist at UNC Charlotte. The physical award itself is a piece of custom botanical art by François Mey of France: a painting of the exquisitely beautiful and extremely rare naturally-occurring *Sarracenia* hybrid, *S. charlesmoorei*, which is the cross of *S. purpurea* subsp. *purpurea* and *S. jonesii* described by Larry in the 2008 CPN (https://cpn.carnivorousplants.org/articles/CPNv37n4p112_117.pdf).

Larry, the ICPS, & the CPN

Larry actually met with Donald Schnell well before the first CPN issue, just as ideas for what would become the newsletter were being realized. "Count me in!", he told Schnell in his office in Virginia, after Schnell mentioned to him that some sort of club or periodical was soon to be designed specifically for CPs. Having studied *Sarracenia* for a number of years, he necessarily knew Don Schnell and the two had corresponded for some time. Larry would not officially become part of the new organization until somewhat after its inception, but he was indeed part of the early network that developed ICPS. After becoming a CPN editor in 1977, Larry would publish several bite-size botanical histories of most of the known carnivorous plant genera at the time, as well as a collection of other smaller pieces for the early newsletter.

Larry's botanical horticulture

Larry's balanced background of botany and horticulture has served him well as an author of numerous pieces of popular literature and as a teacher of botany, as well as in his cross-disciplinary

projects between those two close yet socially disjointed fields. He has served on the boards of over 20 world-renowned botanical and horticultural societies, many focused on native plants, their cultivation, and their conservation. His direction of the UNCC Botanic Gardens saw their maintenance and further development as a world-class botanical institution, even persevering through decades what would have seen their atrophy under lesser management. His work extended well beyond curation, involving much personally solicited and secured support dependent on decades of reputability, during a time of a mounting lack of support for botanical study in a new industrial age of science, less friendly to the naturalist academics of earlier decades.

Larry's passion: Rare southern flora

Indeed, Larry is one of the relatively few botanists who originate in the American South and study its flora. He notes a depressing dearth in active botanists in the region today, corresponding to a lack of support for botanical study in general. Larry became a hugely influential voice for the biodiversity of the American Southeast through his many publications and influential societal memberships and positions. His interests are hallmarked by a fascination with the rare and the origins of the rare. His necessarily passionate advocacy for broader recognition of the ancient origins and current plight of rare flora of the American South, including its orchids and *Sarracenia*, is a central aspect of his career around which much can be understood. Had he not become a botanist, I imagine Larry would easily have been a world-class historian. His methods seem to lie in understanding the origins of things, a fixation on the rare, the “archaeological” – relics like *S. oreophila* and *S. jonesii* that he refers to as reverently as a historian might to the Egyptian Pyramids. He does this so that we can better understand why things are the way they are. It is in Larry's *interpretation* of botany that becomes both art and illustration in one comprehensive expression.

Larry and the future of Sarraceniology

Larry's work in Sarraceniology is unique among scholars. He has studied them for over 50 years, since he was an undergrad at UNC Charlotte. His early study of *Sarracenia* is at the tail-end of the long era of discovery when scholars finally had described much of what was contemporarily accessible to them and could then look back on things (“Sarraceniology”, a term of his recent invention, is tellingly retrospective in origin). Larry especially among others in the field understands a historiography of the study. One could imagine that such a solid historiography of Sarraceniology might orient the work of future enthusiasts on a bedrock of comprehensive observation and study, fortunately stemming from before the precipitous fall of the genus into its current state of rarity and endangerment. It is critical that our instruments of interpretation are enriched by our predecessors just as they criticize and revise the field that was left to them. Larry witnessed the living range of *Sarracenia* in their prime and was contemporary to other scholars like Fred Case and Donald Schnell. It was in the late 1980s, he notes, that sites began to disappear. The habitat and range of *Sarracenia* began to shrink in the familiar story of habitat degradation. He may as well have witnessed the fall of the Roman Empire. Few others can accurately capture that knowledge in a way meaningful to everybody, and there are none who can transmit it with such authority.