

In Memoriam

Leslie J. Mehrhoff



Les Mehrhoff (Dr. Leslie J. Mehrhoff) was an outstanding botanist and an accomplished and enthusiastic naturalist. He was well known in Connecticut (CT), New England, nationally and, in the past few years, internationally, with travels to China related to invasive species. He worked tirelessly to protect endangered species and to identify invasive plants and prevent their spread. One of his most recent awards was the United States Environmental Protection Agency Lifetime Achievement Award.

The CT Invasive Plant Council (CGS.22a-381) was established in great part by Les' advocacy to establish a legislative body that would address invasive plant issues, create a formal list of invasive plant species and potentially invasive plants.

Les' concern with non-native plants and their impacts to natural areas led to the creation of the Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group (CIPWG) in 1997. He served as CIPWG Co-chairperson for many years. CIPWG members promote educational awareness of invasive plants and their non-invasive alternatives. Les drafted the first CT list of invasive plants and the scientific criteria that determine which plants are listed.

Another of Les' many initiatives was the creation of the Invasive Plant Atlas of New England (IPANE). This regional database tracks locations of invasive plants throughout New England and provides information on distribution of invasive species, their spread and population trends. DEEP is using this database to track locations of invasive plants in CT.

Les inspired, encouraged, mentored and educated so many people about protecting natural diversity and about the negative impacts caused by non-native invasive species. He influenced botanists, biologists, legislators, students and gardeners. He was an amazing photographer who used his pictures to give innumerable talks and presentations to educate people on biodiversity and the importance of protecting species and their natural habitats.

Les was a passionate botanist/biologist. His life's work has most certainly helped to protect the biological diversity of Connecticut and much of New England.

In Memoriam

Mary E. Musgrave Blasiak



Dr. Mary E. Musgrave served as the Chairperson of the CT Invasive Plant Council for three years starting in 2008 through 2010.

Mary was a very creative and highly regarded research scientist who specialized in space biology, studying the effects of microgravity on developmental and physiological processes in plants. She was the first person to grow plants from seed-to-seed in space. As a NASA investigator and advisor to the Russian space program, she had projects on both the MIR international space station and the US space shuttle.

Throughout her career Mary was an inspiration to her peers, a mentor to her students, a teacher of scientists and a graceful and resourceful administrator. Those closest to her remember Mary as “insatiably curious, fiendishly clever, a lover of first principles, taking delight in how things work, and carrying her enthusiasm for life into every aspect of her existence”. She also displayed a remarkably sophisticated sense of humor.

Dr. Musgrave began her professional career as a post-doc at Duke University working in space biology. In 1987, she joined the faculty at Louisiana State University/LSU AgCenter (Baton Rouge), was promoted with tenure in 1991, and rose to the rank of Professor in the Department of Plant Pathology and Crop Physiology in 1996. She served as Associate Dean in the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst from 1999-2003. From there, she moved to the University of Connecticut where she served as Professor and Head of the Department of Plant Science and Landscape Architecture until illness forced her to step down earlier this year.