

HUGH AND GRACE EYERDOM MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION

The Hugh and Grace Eyerdome Memorial Scholarship was established as part of the Hugh and Grace Eyerdome Memorial Fund created by Don and Edith Simmons in loving memory of Edith's parents in December 2012. The purpose of this scholarship which is administered by The Highland Foundation of Educational Excellence is to encourage Highland students to pursue careers that perpetuate Hugh Eyerdome's love of working with growing things. Hugh had a feel for nature. He loved fresh soil, read voraciously and knew a little about a lot of things. Everything interested him. These passions allowed him to understand the genetic make-up of a small blue flower and culminated in a family project called Granger Gardens that brought international recognition to Granger Township. Through this scholarship, his memory lives on.

Background

Hugh was born in 1903 in Cleveland, Ohio of immigrant parents. His formal education ended in ninth grade when he quit school at the age of fourteen to help support a fatherless family of six children. He went to work on a truck garden on Schaaf Road in old Brooklyn. In his early twenties, Hugh delivered bread and ice and used his spare time to work the soil. In 1926, Hugh married his wife Grace and bought a small parcel of ground on Jennings Road in the greenhouse district. In 1935, the two bought a small piece of muck land in Granger Township. In 1938, they purchased a farm on Wilbur Road. They built their first greenhouse in 1940.

The story of Granger Gardens' African Violets started in 1945 when Grace received a violet as a Mother's Day present from her son Dale. She fell in love with violets and bought one after another until their dining room could hold no more. Grace borrowed a small portion of a greenhouse bench from Hugh to start her own violets. Hugh became interested in the violets too. He felt that there was more in that little plant than just a plain blue flower on plain green leaves. From the small portion of Hugh's celery plant bench, there evolved five greenhouses full of plants that originated at Granger Gardens. Hugh began cross pollinating one violet plant from another and found that there was more than one color in the chromosomes of each plant. His efforts led to him become an incredibly successful violet hybridizer. He worked with OSU and Columbia Universities in hybridizing the effects of radiation on the seeds of the plant to see if different offspring would be produced because of the radiation. Hugh introduced the world to the first double white violet.

Beginning in the mid 1950's, Granger Gardens displayed plants at national conventions. Grace would travel across the country with new plants that Hugh had developed the previous year. Never did she come home without an award for the newest variety. In 1963, she and Hugh were awarded the National Silver Cup for best commercial exhibit and the National Bronze Plaque for introducing the best new variety of the year, a double frilly, deep pink, white edged violet with wavy dark bronze green foliage. Granger Gardens became known internationally through these conventions. Hundreds of plants were shipped abroad. In the 1960's and 1970's, Grace traveled extensively as a judge for the African Violet Society. Hugh's crowning achievement was discovering a method of reproducing the world's first striped violet. While many striped violets had been produced, none reproduced. Hugh discovered the method that enabled the plant to reproduce every time, thus creating a whole new process. He willingly shared this with the world, so that all could enjoy it.

Award

The Hugh and Grace Eyerdome Memorial Scholarship shall be funded annually at the discretion of The Highland Foundation. Notification of the availability and amount of the scholarship award will be made to the Highland High School Guidance department each February. The scholarship is open to high school students residing in the Highland Local School District pursuing a course of study in horticulture, agriculture, or other closely related field. This study can include, but need not be limited to, an undergraduate course of study at an accredited two- or four-year college. Interested applicants should complete the scholarship application and return it to the Highland High School Guidance Department. The scholarship recipients will be chosen by a Highland Local School District Scholarship Committee in consultation with The Highland Foundation and will be recognized at the Annual Scholarship Awards Assembly in May.

