

HGSA 2009 Summer Conference and Variety Trials Report

Our second annual Summer Meeting in Corvallis in August was a huge success! Everyone attending learned a lot both from our trials and roundtable program and from each other; we saw some really interesting and unique seed production, met new peers in the industry and had a chance to catch up with old friends.

Our host, Wild West Seed, really went all out to make sure that our program met and exceeded everyone's expectations. The hotel was welcoming, friendly and comfortable, the weather and the surroundings were beautiful and our program went together flawlessly.



We began **Sunday evening** with an opening reception hosted by Hart Seed Company . It was a pleasure to see both old friends and lots of new faces as the evening light streamed through the beautiful big windows of our hotel' s reception area and bar.

Monday morning, we boarded our vans, soon arriving at the Oregon State University's trials. OSU's Jim Meyers treated us to an excellent tour and explanation of the goals for the research and variety trials he is doing in breeding and improving vegetable varieties specifically for organic growers - which of course has perfect relevance for us in the home garden trade. We could've easily spent several more hours there!



Next we went on to our own extensive HGSA member trials laid out, planted and tended for us by Wild West's John Wahlert and his staff. This was an excellent opportunity to see how everyone's varieties perform in this Pacific Northwest climate. The rows and beds were carefully and painstakingly laid out and labeled and evaluations and comparisons were easy and rewarding. Everyone took notes and lots of pictures and exchanged opinions on what did well

and looked good. This was the biggest and most expansive trials we've had so far -- everyone agreed that the benefits of looking at both current and new varieties in trial in different areas cannot be overstated.



Our lunch break was a short ride away at the Gathering Together Farm. The farm produces organic seeds for local seed companies and also has a charming restaurant which served us a delicious lunch emphasizing fresh veggies in a very pleasant outdoor dining room. Afterwards, the whole group climbed into their 1937 flat bed truck for a hay ride tour of a few of their various seed productions -- this was not only educational but lots of fun.



Monday afternoon we returned to the hotel for roundtables: first our HGSA Membership Meeting where we heard from both existing and new members on their interests and the Board got feedback and ideas for future activities of the organization. After the meeting, we hosted a discussion with a group of local Master Gardeners to get their feedback and input on how to improve our packet seeds for consumers.

After a break, we loaded up and went on to convene for a relaxing and enjoyable dinner at the Big River restaurant. We had a wine tasting of local vintages followed by a fine dinner where everyone had a good time chatting and sharing stories and tall tales.



Tuesday morning, after a buffet breakfast at the hotel on another morning of fine weather, we got in our van caravan for a really instructive as well as beautiful tour of different flower seed production sites in the Willamette Valley. This tour included driving through a patchwork of small scale agriculture and beautiful farms to see some stunning flower seed production fields tucked into in small scenic valleys. This was a true highlight of our conference.



Our van hosts, from both Wild West and S & S Seeds, were more than generous in sharing their knowledge of how they grow flower seeds. Long time grower /wholesaler Kevin Loe generously hosted us on a tour of Triangle Farm, his large and well- run seed cleaning and warehousing facility that certainly filled in anyone's information gaps of how seed gets from harvest in the field into bags and cans. His farms were located in a particularly beautiful setting.



Lunch was a delicious barbecue buffet laid out for us back at the Wild West warehouse and we all had good appetites! We then piled back in our vans for a quick tour of Nichols Garden Nursery's facility and garden.



Tuesday afternoon brought our final roundtable at the hotel: Michaela Colley, the very able and articulate program director for the Organic Seed Alliance based in Port Townsend, Washington, gave us a short overview of their programs to educate and prepare small scale seed growers who want to enter the market . Then the group had a discussion with her on how we as seed purchasers could work with her group in developing business relationships with new small growers for hard-to-find or varieties that would otherwise disappear from the marketplace. All agreed this discussion will yield good results in the future as their program develops.

Finally in the late afternoon, we had a closing reception where everyone had a chance to touch base and exchange notes for a final social hour or two. Here is our group portrait, taken at Monday's Wild West trials.

