



Press Release
For immediate release

The Creator and the Director of the Reford Gardens Honoured
**Elsie Reford and Alexander Reford:
Winners of the Henry Teuscher Award**

Montréal, May 29, 2009 – In conjunction with its *Great Gardening Weekend*, the Botanical Garden presented the Henry Teuscher Award to two winners this morning: **Elsie Reford** (posthumously) and her great-grandson **Alexander Reford**, Director of the Reford Gardens (*Jardins de Métis*), for their exceptional contribution to advancing horticultural knowledge in Quebec.

Extraordinary gardens

This year's Henry Teuscher Award salutes the woman who created and the man who directs a true green paradise in the Gaspé, the *Reford Gardens*, which has become a must-see garden destination for Quebeckers and tourists alike. The site's tremendous beauty, the constant search for suitable plants and especially the passion of these two members of the Reford family for nature are truly exemplary. Every summer, thousands of admiring visitors stop at the *Reford Gardens* for a thrilling natural experience, to wonder at the some 3,000 species and varieties of plants, trees and shrubs there.

A dedicated builder

Elsie Reford (1872-1967) was the founder of the now famous *Reford Gardens*. The property originally belonged to her uncle, Lord Mount Stephen, who bequeathed it to her in 1918. Over the next thirty years, she transformed the vast estate, formerly a rustic lodge and fishing camp for fly fishermen, into a magnificent series of gardens. It was Elsie, an instinctive gardener endowed with a legendary green thumb, as Henry Teuscher himself described her, who created these gardens from scratch. She relied on her solid instincts, her love of nature and her remarkable energy. Throwing herself into refining the beauties of the site and adapting conventional planting and growing techniques to the local conditions, she succeeded in building a garden in a setting that initially seemed quite unsuitable. Her experiments with new species, selected for their adaptability to a sometimes inhospitable and particularly harsh natural environment – including Himalayan blue poppies, the Gardens' emblem – were thoroughly documented and marked an important milestone in the development of Quebec horticulture.

Gardening friends

It should be noted that Henry Teuscher, Chief Horticulturist at the Montréal Botanical Garden at the time, and Elsie Reford were friends. After the two met at a lecture in Montréal, Teuscher visited Elsie's gardens and was amazed at their beauty and lush variety. They corresponded regularly, exchanging opinions and gardening ideas. In the end, it was Teuscher who helped save the property, since it was thanks to his influence that the Quebec government acquired the gardens and buildings in 1961. At the government's request, he developed the scientific, experimental and tourism aspects of the gardens, with respect for the existing gardens and facilities.

A horticultural family

The co-winner of the 2009 Henry Teuscher Award is Alexander Reford, Elsie Reford's great-grandson and Director of the Reford Gardens since 1995. A historian by training, with degrees from Oxford and the University of Toronto, Mr. Reford has written several books, including *The Reford Gardens. Elsie's Paradise* (Les Éditions de l'Homme, 2004) and *Treasures of the Reford Gardens. Elsie's Floral Legacy* (Les Éditions de l'Homme, 2006). A tremendous gardening enthusiast, he is not only President of the Association des jardins du Québec, but also co-founder of the International Garden Festival, launched in 2000 and praised by gardening writers and critics as the first outstanding show in the field of garden design. Devoted to preserving the Reford Gardens and their reputation as a horticultural, ecological and tourism jewel, he directed exhaustive renovations of their historic buildings. In 2002, with the preservation of the property alongside the St. Lawrence River and the creation of an ecological park on the banks of the Mitis River, the Reford Gardens became a leading player in nature protection.

Previous winners of the HENRY TEUSCHER AWARD, 1999-2008

Elsie Reford and Alexander Reford join the list of other winners of the Henry Teuscher Award. They are **Jean-Claude Vigor** (2008), horticulturist, teacher and communicator; **Émile Jacqmain** (2007), horticulturist and superintendent of the Montréal Botanical Garden, responsible for its exceptional development and modernization between 1966 and 1996 and co-ordinator of the production of the *Floralies* outdoor gardens in 1980; **Fred Oehmichen** (2006), landscape architect and horticulturist, expert on grasses and owner of Oka fleurs (2006); **Daniel A. Séguin** (2005), agronomist, professor at the ITA, initiator of the horticulture event in Saint-Hyacinthe and a pioneer in training professional horticulturists in Quebec; Gaëtan Hamel (2004), founder of the Centre Jardin Hamel; **Milan B. Havlin** (2003), landscape architect and professor at the ITA; **Henri and Camille Perron** (2002), horticulturists and founders of W.H. Perron Ltd.; **Wilfrid Meloche** (2001), one of Mr. Teuscher's co-workers, professor at the Institut de technologie agricole de Saint-Hyacinthe (ITA) and head of the Garden's greenhouses; **Roger Van Den Hende** (2000), professor emeritus with the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Science at Université Laval, landscape architect and founder of the Roger Van Den Hende Garden; and **Tony Huber** (1999), horticulturist and iris breeder.

This event is organized in co-operation with the Friends of the Montréal Botanical Garden and representatives of the horticultural industry in Quebec.

Montréal's Nature Museums – the Biodôme, Insectarium, Botanical Garden and Planetarium – helping people enjoy nature to the fullest.

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