Randy Dykstra, 2020 Harper Award Recipient
Text David Horst and David Speth

Randy Dykstra in his Garden, Clinton, IA. Photo by Dennis Groh.

Randy Dykstra is the 2020 recipient of the American Conifer Society Justin C. “Chub” Harper Award for Development in the Field of Conifers. David Horst and David Speth nominated Randy for this award.

Randy is a nurseryman, gardener, and an avid, long-time member and supporter of the ACS.

Randy has an amazing collection of unique conifers in his garden, which is open to the public. Since the 1980's, his garden has been featured in many regional and local ACS events.

After meeting in the early 1980's, Randy and Chub found themselves traveling throughout Iowa and Illinois searching for and collecting conifer witch's brooms. In February 2005, Chub published a booklet listing the witch's brooms that they had found, which totaled 511 unique plants. After the first few years of working together, Randy took on the propagation of the new witch's brooms that they had collected, representing the introduction of hundreds of new conifer cultivars. Many of these original brooms are still growing in Randy’s garden, along with other rare and unique conifers.

In addition to his work with Chub Harper, Randy also joined Jerry Morris in searching for conifer witch's brooms and subsequently propagated the collected plants.

Randy has been a champion of new conifers for garden use for more than 40 years. His garden, with its large collection of unique conifers, has been the subject of many tours, which always turn out to be educational experiences for anyone attending. Although he is a quiet person, Randy has a passion for educating the gardening public about the plants that he has propagated, and demonstrating his techniques for grafting, raising cuttings, and seed propagation.

Of the hundreds of witch's brooms and seedlings that Randy has propagated, many are readily recognized by conifer lovers and are still available to collectors. As an example, he has worked with Iseli Nursery, supplying several of his unique plants for large-scale development and sales. Iseli currently has two of Randy's plants in production:

- *Picea pungens* ‘Christina’
  (Christina Colorado spruce)

- *Thuja occidentalis* ‘Golden Blush’
  (Golden Blush eastern arborvitae)

In 2019, Randy received recognition by the ACS Central Region with its Distinguished Service Award for exhibiting extraordinary volunteerism in support of the goals and operation of the region, while contributing greatly by introducing new plants and educating interested gardeners in his techniques and experiences.

Randy epitomizes the attributes of the Harper Award.