

Arthur J. Pratt

May 3, 1905 — December 14, 1994

Arthur J. Pratt, Professor Emeritus of Vegetable Crops, was born to Bert and Gertrude Barber Pratt in Norwich, New York. He grew up on a farm that had been cleared and settled by his ancestors in 1810 and attended a one-room school and the Oxford Academy. Art received his B.S. (1926) and Ph.D. (1933) degrees from Cornell University. He retired from the Department of Vegetable Crops in 1962 after thirty years on the faculty.

Much of Dr. Pratt's early career was spent working in vegetables with students of all ages. He co-founded, with Professor Grant Snyder, the National Junior Vegetable Growers Association and was active in it for over seventeen years. He was also active in the Tompkins County 4-H Club and other 4-H groups; and he coached state 4-H teams that many times won national judging, grading, and identification contests. Dr. Pratt also coached collegiate vegetable teams for fifteen years. In 1940, Dr. Pratt was given the Duncan Memorial Award for his outstanding work in encouraging young people to continue their education in marketing vegetables; and in 1963, he received the State Honorary Empire Degree from the Future Farmers of America. Dr. Pratt was a member of the American Potato Association, the American Association of Horticultural Science, and Sigma Xi.

In 1955, Dr. Pratt began teaching a new general horticulture course that had not been taught since the days of Liberty Hyde Bailey. The course—which Dr. Pratt continued to teach until his retirement—covered fruits, flowers, and vegetables. It grew to be popular with students from many parts of the University, as it still is today. Dr. Pratt was recognized by the students in 1962 when they awarded him the Professor of Merit Award from the College of Agriculture.

Dr. Pratt wrote a number of publications on vegetable production, including Victory Garden leaflets and many service letters during World War II. He was author of the book *Gardening Made Easy* in 1955. In 1935, Dr. Pratt was an early developer of the Consumers' Cooperative Society of Ithaca, serving on various committees and as president several times over a forty-year span.

Potato culture was always an interest of Dr. Pratt's, and he did considerable research on effects of irrigation on yield and tuber set. After his retirement, Dr. Pratt spent time growing and testing potato varieties, and he developed the "Pride" potato variety. While working in Ithaca and in Arizona, Dr. Pratt's innovative research on the use of specialized irrigation techniques, spacing, and other cultural practices with peppers resulted in pepper yields that far exceeded what growers were normally achieving. He also did research throughout his career on irrigation,

plastic, and organic mulches for home gardens as well as for commercial vegetable crops. A particular research interest was finding a method to determine when a crop needed water. A common question was, and still is, "What is the best time of day to water vegetables?" His answer, "It makes little difference, just be sure you do it before the crops are damaged." Dr. Pratt liked to put into practice what he had learned from a career of teaching and research. For many years he grew potatoes on Mt. Pleasant, near Ithaca; and from 1968-74, he operated Perry City Farms, growing potatoes and vegetables for local markets and "U-Pick" customers.

His experience in farm operations and research procedures also took Dr. Pratt overseas. He served as a consultant on potatoes to the Tasmanian and Australian Departments of Agriculture, and he taught horticulture at the University of Liberia for more than a year. He taught for nearly two years in Jamaica, West Indies, on a U.S.A.I.D. assignment.

He is survived by his wife of sixty-three years, Terrace Pratt of Ithaca; a son, Dr. David Pratt of Davis, California; a daughter, Jean Washington of San Diego, California, and Thailand; and a daughter, Sarah Davis-King of Oroville, California. Surviving grandchildren are Michael and Bruce Pratt, Brian and Jeff Washington, Brian King, Wendy and Deborah Pratt, Laura Washington, Tamara Pulsts, and Melissa Hillis. Surviving great-grandchildren are David Washington, Amy and Karen Cucuvitch, and Geoff and Brennan Pratt.

Dr. Pratt was a man who enjoyed taking creative approaches to practical, applied problems. He loved his work and gave generously of himself to colleagues, family, and friends. His students kept in touch and visited him over many years. His personal and professional lives were woven together in an harmonious union. He was demanding of himself and tolerant of others; and will be remembered with respect and affection as a person of enterprise, integrity, and always good cheer.

Art thoroughly enjoyed his interaction with young people. Once, during the course of an interview, he was asked whether there was anything he would enjoy after having had a successful career as a teacher, researcher, and professor emeritus. He paused for a moment and simply replied, "I would love to hear from more of my past 4-H Club members and former Cornell students." It was typical of Dr. Pratt's generosity and interest in young people that he and Mrs. Pratt made a substantial contribution to establish the Vegetable Crops Graduate Student Fund endowment. This fund has grown over the years, and many graduate students have benefited from it, just as many young people benefited from knowing him.

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