

# Remembering Donald Angus

A true friend and admirer of flowering plants, a renaissance man, Hawaiian historian and renowned horticulturist passed away quietly at home Jan. 28, 2001, at the great old age of 94. Though he was perhaps best known as an art collector with a special interest in horticultural prints, Donald Angus was cherished in gardening circles for the many fine horticultural specimens he imported to Hawai'i and shared with private gardeners and public gardens, including the Honolulu Botanical Gardens.

Angus particularly loved flowering trees, such as rainbow showers, the golden form of royal poinciana, plumeria and shrubs such as gardenia, ginger, hibiscus and bougainvillea. He was on the lookout for gorgeous plants his entire life as he traveled the globe.

He was responsible for bringing many wonderful plants to the Islands. During a long sojourn in Morocco and time in England, he searched for old-fashioned varieties that might be lost and for new attractive plants that people liked to grow.

Many of the bougainvillea varieties that grace Hawai'i today were found, grown and shared by Angus. He was always seeking new and special varieties. He imported these as seeds or cuttings, which were propagated at the Honolulu Botanical Gardens, then released to gardens and nurseries with great fanfare at Foster Botanical Garden plant sales. Angus collected bougainvillea seed from near Nairobi, Kenya, and from the Philippines, and distributed the seeds to friends and gardens in Honolulu.

One of his main horticultural buddies was Jim Little, who would drive him around various neighborhoods in search of the ultimate color of plumeria, shower tree or other choice plants. Perhaps some of our readers recall a large man with a kind and inquisitive face who appeared at the back door asking about a gorgeously colored plumeria or other flowering plant.

Noted horticulture professor Richard Criley of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa was also a fan of Angus and his plant contributions. He recalls how much Angus loved the rainbow shower trees along Farrington Street in Mōi'ili'i (our official street tree of

## HAWAI'I GARDENS

By Heidi Bornhorst



Donald Angus with a yellow hibiscus, his favorite color

Honolulu, the great made-in-Hawai'i hybrid rainbow shower). One day, Angus took Criley and Little in tow to track down less common rainbow shower trees types in Mililani, finding one at Mililani High School that had a branch sport (a natural mutation) on a Wilhelmina Tenney variety similar to the Nii Gold (a gorgeous yellow-orange form).

Angus was delighted when he could find something new in bloom. He went into raptures when he saw the golden royal poinciana Saipan that one of Criley's graduate students had collected on Saipan and sent to Hawai'i. Angus had noted fruit propagator Frank Sekiya graft the golden flowering tree and shared its offspring with other gardens. Several now grow at the Hale Koa Hotel, gifts from Angus.

Angus provided contributions to support the development of the plumeria germ plasm collection at the University of Hawai'i Waimānalo Farm back in the 1960s. He also sent all manner of unique plumerias to Ted Chinn (who initiated the collection), and was honored by having the Donald Angus plumeria named for him. It's a great keeper as a lei flower, blooms heavily in both spring and

fall, and is a combination of red-pink-orange with good overlap.

Angus also prevailed upon Criley to name some plumerias in honor of noted Hawaiians: 'Iolani (for hula master 'Iolani Luahine); Lurline (for Lurline Matson Roth), Mary Pukui (for the Hawaiian cultural specialist and translator; a nice yellow, but, unfortunately, rather spare in its blooming). The variety Angus Gold was collected by him, but when it was chosen by the Bishop Museum to honor Bernice Pauahi Bishop, it was given another name, Pauahi Ali'i. (It is a bright red and gold variety.)

At a reception at the Bishop Museum to honor an exhibition of plant paintings and artwork from old botanical publications, Criley gave Angus a lei of the Donald Angus plumeria, made in the "double" style. He was so pleased that he showed it to everyone he talked with, telling them that it was named for him and that Criley had made the lei for him personally.

Angus' botanical prints collection was the result of years of visiting old bookshops in England and on the Continent. He was also deeply involved in transcribing old Hawaiian correspondence.

Angus also bred the fragrant yellow, white and pink Hedychium gingers during a period when he lived in Morocco. He gave his collection to friends when he left and was disappointed when none of the plants could be found when he returned years later to visit.

In my career at Hale Koa Hotel and now with the Honolulu Botanical Gardens, I was lucky to have known and learned from him, and the Honolulu Botanical Gardens continued to get plants from him even in his last months of life. Angus will continue to live on in the form of plants in our gardens and in all our gardens.

A fund in his honor has been set up by the Friends of Honolulu Botanical Gardens to help continue some of his work. Checks may be sent to the Donald Angus Garden Memorial Fund, Friends of Honolulu Botanical Gardens, 200 North Vineyard Blvd., Honolulu, HI 96817. Call 537-1708 for more information.

Aloha, Donald, you are missed.