

LIBERTY HYDE BAILEY BIOGRAPHY

Chuck Staples, CSSA Historian

Bailey, Dr Liberty Hyde, Jr (1858–1954)—author of popular *Hortus* book and many scientific papers—known as the 'Dean of American Horticulture'.



Born on a fruit farm near South Haven, Michigan on 15 March 1858, Liberty Hyde Bailey attended a small country school near the farm where he was born. He became a noted horticulturist, botanist, taxonomist, plant breeder, explorer, outstanding teacher, successful administrator, lobbyist, rural sociologist, prolific writer, editor, environmentalist, philosopher, photographer, poet and visionary.

After receiving a Bachelor of Science degree in horticulture at Michigan Agricultural College (now Michigan State University in East Lansing) in 1882, Bailey spent two years assisting Asa Gray (1810-1888), professor of natural history and botany, at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Returning to Michigan Agricultural College in 1884, Bailey assumed the role of professor of horticulture and landscape gardening and earned a Master of Science in botany at the college in 1885. In 1888 Bailey accepted a position of professor of horticulture at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York on the condition that they sponsor a trip to Europe, Cornell accepted this condition, and Bailey was able to visit every important herbarium west of Russia. In 1903 he became director of the College of Agriculture at Cornell. This was the year he co-founded (and served as its first president for four years) the American Society for Horticultural Science with Dr Spencer A Beach (1860-1922). By 1904 Bailey was appointed dean of a new independent State College of Agriculture at Cornell and director of the College and its Experiment Station and professor of Rural Economy. He set up the Department of Experimental Plant Biology at Cornell in 1907. His official retirement from Cornell was in 1913, but he continued to be active in research and University affairs for the rest of his life.

Bailey received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from University of Wisconsin, Madison in 1907 and from Alfred University (Village of Alfred in western New York) in 1908. He received an honorary doctorate of literature from University of Vermont, Burlington in 1919. He served as president of the Botanical Society of America during the year 1926 and president of American Society of Plant Taxonomists in 1939. The Liberty Hyde Bailey Hortorium at Cornell University was named in his honor based on a gift by him of his herbarium and library in 1935. Dr Bailey told them to “Call it an Hortorium as a repository for things of the garden for the scientific study, documentation, classification and naming of garden plants.” The periodical *Baileya*, a quarterly journal of horticultural taxonomy, first published by the Hortorium in 1953, was also named in his honor. Dr Bailey received many honorary awards during his lifetime for his work in horticulture and agricultural economics, such as the Veitch Silver (1896) and Gold (1927) Medals from The Royal Horticultural Society in London, and the Gold Medal from Garden Club of America in 1931. He received the prestigious Fellow award from CSSA in 1941 for writings, especially the 'Cyclopedia of Horticulture'.

Dr Bailey edited a number of horticultural books, including the monumental *Standard Cyclopedia of Horticulture* (1927 in three volumes), *Hortus First* (1930), and with his daughter Ethel Zoe Bailey (1889-1983) as co-author of *Hortus Second* (1952) and *Hortus Third* (1976). He wrote or edited some 200 books and more than 1,200 scientific papers during his lifetime. Among succulent plants, he described *Hoya sanae* in 1896 (now *Hoya australis* ssp *sanae*) and *Othonna capensis* in 1901. During an expedition to China in 1917, Dr Bailey discovered a new *Sedum* species (*S. baileyi*) that was named in his honor by Robert Lloyd Praeger (1865-1953) in 1919.

A 3-cent stamp honoring Gardening and Horticulture was issued on 15 March 1958 in Ithaca, New York on the 100th anniversary of the birth of Dr Bailey in conjunction with a centennial celebration in honor of his birth by Cornell University. He is remembered as “A Man for All Seasons” and the “Dean of American Horticulture”.

His death occurred during his 96th year, on 25 December 1954.

References:

Fairchild D. 1942. Liberty Hyde Bailey. *Cact Succ J (US)* 14: 2.

Cutak LT. 1944. Spine Chats. *Cact Succ J (US)* 16: 139.

Cutak LT. 1955. Spine Chats. *Cact Succ J (US)* 27: 31.

Isely D. 1994. *One Hundred and One Botanists*. 274-277.

Eggl U, Newton LE. 2004. *Etymological Dictionary of Succulent Plant Names*. 21.

Staples CJ. 2013. *A Historical Record of Authors of C&S Plant Names & Books for the Amateur Hobbyist*. Vol 1, 28.