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Remembering Chinese Horticulturist T.L. Huang

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T. L. Huang (September 1906 – March 2005) was a senior horticulturist of China best known for ornamental plant breeding. He was a consultant for the China Flower Society, and a member of the Mei Flower (Plum Blossom), *Calycanthus* (in America, *Chimonanthus praecox*) and American Camellia Society.

T.L. Huang was born in Zhejiang Province. He moved to Shanghai along with his father, also another famous horticulturalist in China. In 1908 his father, Y.Y Huang, founded Huang's Plant Farm. T.L. Huang served as the farm's director from 1924 to 1956. During this period, he became an expert in the study of plant horticulture, including the collection, hybridization, and culture of many popular and rare ornamental plants. Cross-breeding on azalea and chrysanthemum was carried out at that time.

In 1948, he and his father published "HUA JING" which was the first monograph of landscape plants after the Qing dynasty in China. While in Shanghai, he also designed and constructed several beautiful private gardens for local celebrities and merchants.

Huang also worked in Longhua Nursery from 1953 to 1973 (which was reconstructed into Shanghai Botanical Garden in 1972). While at the nursery, he collected more than 100 species of native plants, including azaleas, camellias, and peonies. Unfortunately, most of the work with those collections ended with the Cultural Revolution.

Huang retired from Shanghai Botanical Garden in 1973. But his work in the horticulture continued until he passed away in 2005. Cross-breeding of camellias, azaleas, and cymbidiums fulfilled his old age. Many beautiful camellias and azalea hybrids were distributed not only in China but in America and other countries.

Little is known about the Huang evergreen azalea hybrids created by Mr. Huang because most of his work done before the Cultural Revolution in China was lost. One source of information is the documented observations of Col. Ronald C. Vines (Ret.), reproduced from his 1990 catalog on the Azalea Society of America Web site (<http://www.azaleas.org/index.pl/huang.html>). Col. Vines believed the Huang hybrids were the most important hybrid group of evergreen azaleas in existence, in terms of the diverse bloom size and type, foliage, and plant habit.

Pictures of a few Huangs being evaluated by Auburn University are shown on their www.ag.auburn.edu/landscape/Huangpage.html page.

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