

Shelby French, 2022 Fellow Award Recipient

The Fellow Award was created to acknowledge outstanding members of the IPPS Eastern Region, who have contributed to the advancement of the organization and to the field of Plant Propagation and Production. This recognition is for contributions to the IPPS through participation, service, leadership, research, teaching or extension work. Only active members with at least 10 years of membership are eligible.

We are gathering nominations of worthy candidates for awards to be presented at our 2023 conference. It's quick & easy to make a nomination by emailing Recognition Committee Chair Todd Baker (todd@bakersnursery.ca). As always, names are held for three years.

Shelby French

One fellow propagator describes Shelby French as having "an encyclopedia brain." It is said that she can recall what year she propagated a species, where she collected the seed, the number of seeds she propagated, and even the color of shirt she was wearing at the time! The friend said that this may be a bit of exaggeration but that one of Shelby's greatest assets is her ability to catalog and recall propagation information. She remembers the minutia because she cares about each individual species.

When visiting her home, one never leaves empty handed due to her backyard collection of gems. She essentially has a small nursery beside her shed, where she nurtures countless plants before they find their forever home. From choice specimens to those brought back from the brink, plants that find their way there are cared for and eventually planted or gifted. This is all a labor of love—both for the plants and for sharing with others.

From formal continuing education to casual instruction of visitors to the greenhouse, everyone who comes to her looking for information leaves knowledgeable and inspired. She mentored many interns during her career, helping to cultivate the next generation of plant experts. She seamlessly taught both propagation and life skills. She is enthusiastically welcoming and ready to share the knowledge she has gained in this industry.



All these attributes follow a common thread—passion. Passion is at the core of everything she does. She is deeply passionate about plant propagation and invests her time into it professionally and personally. She generously shares her knowledge with others and engages in the development of those around her. She is detailed, dedicated, and thoughtful. She leads with passion and is an outstanding plant propagator because of it.

Shelby is quoted in a magazine article while referencing propagation techniques:

"We're trying to replicate a bird's stomach in a plastic bag.

Typically, anything that is a berry-like seed has a chemical inhibitor in the fruit that prevents germination. In the wild, an animal like a bird or a bear would eat fruit and [the seed] would get cleaned as it passed through the animal's gullet."

She is not only a brilliant propagator but also a mentor and friend. She always gives practical and compassionate golden nuggets of advice. Her energetic and delightful spirit also livens her work environment. For just about every holiday, she decks out the greenhouse to celebrate. Overnight the headhouse becomes a festive space with colored lights, streamers, and hanging decorations. Sometimes she wears matching accessories for the occasion. She also adds to the ambiance with her numerous CDs with custom playlists to fit each holiday—sea shanties, spooky tunes, and holiday jingles. She makes everything around her brighter and cheerier.

She was previously Assistant Greenhouse Manager/Propagator at Mount Cuba Center and is now propagator at The Farm at Doe Run. She joined IPPS in 2012 and has spent more than half that time on the board or a committee. Shelby is the 2nd Vice President of the Eastern Region of IPPS.