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Patricia Knight Receives SAF's Gold Medal Award



ALEXANDRIA, VA – AUGUST 20, 2025 – Patricia Knight, Ph.D., is the 2025 winner of the Society of American Florists' Gold Medal Award, given to the originator of a widely distributed plant or flower that has proven to be an outstanding product of significant horticulture and commercial value.

As a research professor at Mississippi State University and director of the MSU Coastal Research and Extension Center in Biloxi, Patricia has transformed the southern landscape through a groundbreaking breeding program focused on crape myrtles.

About Patricia:

An Alabama native, Knight earned her bachelor's and master's degrees from Auburn University and her Ph.D. from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

Among her many horticultural contributions, Knight is credited with developing Delta Jazz, the first dark-leaved crape myrtle. This patented variety stands out for its raspberry-maroon foliage that matures to a rich mahogany brown, contrasted by medium-pink summer blooms. In 2015, Delta Jazz was named a Mississippi Medallion plant, an honor that recognizes top-performing varieties suited to the state's unique climate. Knight's crape myrtles — ranging from towering 20-foot trees to compact shrubs — are a staple in USDA zones 7–10, thriving in heat, humidity, and drought. They require minimal maintenance yet deliver vivid summer color and stunning fall foliage in shades of orange, gold, maroon, and red. These characteristics have made them essential elements in southern gardens, providing year-round visual interest and adaptability.

Knight's influence extends beyond plant breeding. A fellow of the American Society for Horticultural Science, she is widely regarded as a leading expert in her field. Colleagues praise her insight, leadership, and innovative research, noting how her work continues to educate, inspire, and enhance the green industry. "I marvel at her vast knowledge," said James Delprince, Ph.D., AAF, AIFD, PFCI, head of Mississippi State's Extension Master Floral Designer program. "I have learned so much from her over the past 10 years."

Event photos will be available here: [SAF Photo albums](#) | [Flickr](#)

About The Society of American Florists

The Society of American Florists is the association that connects and cultivates a thriving floral community through training, education, marketing resources and advocacy. Our vision: The power of flowers in every life. For more information, visit safnow.org.