

4 July 2011

RECOGNITION FOR PLANT HERITAGE THYME COLLECTION

Brickell Award for National Plant Collection Holder, Margaret Easter

The garden plant conservation charity, Plant Heritage, has conferred its most prestigious honour, The Brickell Award, on Mrs Margaret Easter.

Margaret Easter has been growing and researching this aromatic herb for 20 years; her *Thymus* Collection was awarded Scientific Status in 2004 and she also holds smaller National Collections of the herbs *Satureja* (Savory) and *Hyssopus* (Hyssop).

The Brickell Award for Excellence in Cultivated Plant Conservation is presented annually in recognition of outstanding work being undertaken by a National Plant Collection Holder with Scientific status.

Professor Mike Alder, Chairman of Plant Heritage said "Our distant ancestors recognised the medicinal and culinary value of Thyme and it has been in use and cultivation for several thousand years. As a result there is a bewildering complexity of naming and misidentification. Margaret has made a very major contribution to unravelling this and putting the study of *Thymus* on a sound scientific basis. The Brickell award is a tribute to her dedication, energy and sheer determination over many years to develop mankind's knowledge of this important herb."



Thymus species occur across Europe and much of Asia and Margaret's collection includes examples of species from the UK and Europe, as well as cultivars – around 250 in total. She is recognised as one of the world's leading authorities on the genus and is the International Cultivar Registration Authority for *Thymus*. She is a prolific publisher of research into the nomenclature, care and cultivation of *Thymus* and with Dr Madan Thangavelu has undertaken wide-ranging DNA investigation which has cleared up significant identification issues.

In 2006 Margaret was invited to Beijing by the Chinese Academy of Forestry and Beijing Forestry University as adviser for their project to introduce *Thymus* species and cultivars to China.

In addition to her many academic publications, Margaret has written for Plant Heritage *The Thyme Handbook*, with additional articles by Susie White. This is an accessible and beautifully illustrated guide for all gardeners and nurserymen. Over the years Margaret has also bred and named many new cultivars and her small, sunny garden in Hertfordshire is a scented paradise for bees and other wildlife which can be appreciated at her periodic garden Open Days (next: 10 July 2011 – full details www.thymus.co.uk).

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