



Interiorscape Hall of Fame



Everett Conklin, Sr.

2000 Posthumous Inductee

Everett Conklin was born Jan 11, 1908 in Farmingdale, Long Island, New York. He married Ruth Purick in 1930 and began their family in September of 1932 with the birth of their son Everett George Conklin. Everett and Ruth welcomed the birth of their daughters Patricia in 1935, and Betty Jane in 1948.

Everett started his life as a farm boy being raised on a small truck farm growing produce. He grew up loving plants but knowing he did not want to be a farmer. Everett graduated from high school at the age of 15 and set off to make his fortune. He went to New York and got a job working for AT&T in Manhattan. Tiring of that he spent the next few years working for several different nurseries in the area. In 1938 Everett went to work for Bobink & Atkins as a traveling salesman with a territory that was "the whole country". For the next 20 years he traveled the country selling plants and flowers to supermarkets. Everett spent this time building his network of contacts and seeing how business was done in other parts of the country. In 1956 Bobink & Atkins decided to relocate giving Everett an opportunity to rent greenhouse and office space from them and in 1957 founded the Everett Conklin & Co. In the beginning he continued to sell the 2 2 " potted plants as he had always sold, but soon the profit margin disappeared. Something needed to be done.

The annual Macy's Flower Show was a really big event for which Everett supplied flowers. His son, Everett, and a few college friends would come up to help with the labor. The fledgling business grew and in 1963 he moved the business to Montvale, New Jersey. During the 60's, Everett's son worked with him doing installations, maintenance, and of course, the Macy's Flower Show. Their first really big interior planting was the Four Seasons Restaurant. After that came the CBS building in New York, then The Ford Foundation. Their growth continued with the addition to their project list of Rockefeller Center summer garden, Crown Center Hotel, Kansas City and The Rainbow Center in Niagara Falls. These are just a few of the larger installations done during the 60's and 70's. By 1970 Everett had

grown Everett Conklin & Company into one of the largest interior plant companies in the country.

With his straightforward philosophy, Everett's catalog stated, "Our organization, our thinking, our very existence, is geared to the architect, landscape architect and interior designer. We speak their language. We make every attempt to interpret their design concept no matter how abstract or theoretical. Our design knowledge is basic only, but our horticultural knowledge, based on many years of experience is complete."

"We can help you attain your design concepts of indoor trees and plantings, and we can expedite the completion of these designs. Let us help you in your preliminary planning. We offer our assistance in all horticultural matters, including budgetary information, and all at no obligation to you. We have available additional photographs of all indoor trees and plants, which appear in this guide for presentation to your clients." The fields of interior planting and commercial floral decoration are highly specialized. We are pioneers in these fields and rank number one in the US. We hope you will allow us to aid you in your design."

By 1973 his staff numbered 40. His company was installing projects all over the country. Everett's firm specialized in two areas only, commercial flower shows and interior plantings. Concentrating on shopping malls, hotels, and of course, commercial flower shows. A few exterior planting were done but they were not solicited.

Everett believed that the success of interior planting rested with the conditioning of the plants to low light before their installation. He believed that 500 foot-candles was the maximum a plant should be held in for the acclimatization process. Everett recognized that interior designers no longer found "tub and saucer" staging for interior plants aesthetically pleasing. The "new" look demanded fiberglass and ceramic containers, mainly cylinders, with contemporary appeal and design.

Everett was ahead of his time in forwarding the idea that man is inherently unhappy when he lives without plants and flowers. Everett heralded the idea that "if we can prove plants and flowers are a necessity in a man's life then we will increase the demand a thousand times." This message holds true still today in the interiorscape industry.

Everett's dedication was reflected in the organizations for which he volunteered his time. Over the years he served the New Jersey State Florist Association, New York Florists Club,

Metropolitan Retail Florists' Association, Bergen (NJ) County Board of Agriculture, East Rutherford (NJ) Chamber of Commerce, East Rutherford Lions Club. He was Director of the New York International Flower Show, a charter Trustee of the American Academy of Florists, and a program advisor to the US department of Agriculture.

Everett worked tirelessly on growing the floral and plant industry. He was a two-term president of Society of American Florists, travelling more than a million miles during his tenure, visiting other associations, networking and fostering good will.

Everett believed that knowledge should be shared, that in doing so, business prospered and the industry became stronger. He was heard to say, "not sharing knowledge was living in a bygone era and selfishly stupid". Everett's mentor in this idea was Professor Alex Laurie, an early organizer of the Ohio Short Course meetings. Everett was part of the group Professor Laurie invited to gather after the general sessions to share knowledge in an effort to strengthen and make the industry more efficient.

Everett was inducted into the Foliage Hall of Fame in 1976, followed in 1979 with an award from the Nurseryman and Growers Association for the Crown Center Hotel. 1980 brought the Society of American Florists Hall of Fame Award. He was the official Horticultural Advisor for the Winter Games at Lake Placid, New York. In 1982 Everett was elected as a fellow of the International Academy of Poets-Cambridge, England. In August of 1982 Everett Conklin sold his business and retired.

Everett passed away on March 19, 1985 at the age of 77. A true pioneer in the industry of Interior Plantscaping, whose philosophy and vision still hold true today.

