



Interiorscape Hall of Fame



Thomas Rochford, III 2003 Posthumous Inductee

The 2003 Posthumous inductee is Thomas Rochford III of Rochford & Sons and Rochford Landscaping of Enfield, Middlesex, England. Thomas Rochford III was the grandson of the founder of Rochford & Sons, established in 1877. His father grew foliage plants in three acres of glass house in 1881. Over the next 20 years the company grew to 22 acres of greenhouses. One of Tom's early nursery projects was the production of large, 4 - 8 ft., topiary roses, for which he was awarded a Gold Medal at the Ghent Floralties.

During World Wars I and II, the nursery grew food crops. Thomas Rochford returned from active military service in 1945 and took over the business which had been severely damaged by bombing and lack of manpower. Together with a team of hand-picked managers, he rebuilt the glass houses.

Encouraged by Constance Spry, a large and well known London florist, Thomas began supplying 'house plants,' a term he coined in 1947. Rochford was the first nurseryman to sell houseplants to supermarkets and was the first to bring the poinsettia to Europe, working under license and closely associated with Paul Ecke. He introduced Aphelandra. He increased his nursery size to 36 acres of greenhouses, producing 5 million plants annually with 700 varieties of 'house plants' and large specimen plants.

In the 1950s, he was the first nurseryman to introduce a brand label with the plant's common and botanical names, country of origin, and care instructions. Rochford & Sons won 67 Gold Medals and four 'Lawerence Medals' for 'Best Exhibit of the Year' at the Chelsea Flower Show. Rochford was also an innovator of potting machines and water delivery systems for the nursery industry.

Thomas Rochford was a member of the Royal Horticultural Society and served on its council and on various committees. He received its coveted Victoria Medal of Honor. He was president of the Lea Valley Growers Association and was active in political lobbying in the interests of the industry. Mr. Rochford passed away in 1989.

