



7931 East Boulevard Drive
Alexandria, VA 22308-1300
Tel: 703-768-5700
Fax: 703-768-8700
Website: www.ahs.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AMERICAN HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY'S 2008 GREAT AMERICAN GARDENERS AWARD WINNERS

Irene Virag Receives B. Y. Morrison Communication Award

Alexandria, VA (March 2008). Irene Virag is one of 13 outstanding members of the horticultural community who will be honored by the American Horticultural Society (AHS) during its Great American Gardeners Awards Ceremony and Banquet on June 6, 2008. Virag is this year's recipient of the AHS's B. Y. Morrison Communication Award, which previously was known as the Horticultural Communication Award. This award recognizes effective and inspirational communication — through print, radio, television, and/or online media — that advances public interest and participation in horticulture.

Virag has been *Newsday's* garden columnist since 1995. She is now a freelance writer whose work has appeared in magazines such as *Better Homes & Gardens Special Interest Publications* and *Fine Gardening*. Virag has a journalism degree from Boston University. After earning a master's degree at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism, she went to Harvard University on a Nieman Fellowship. She joined *Newsday* in the 1980s and was a member of a team that won a Pulitzer Prize for local reporting in 1986. She later became editor of the newspaper's "Home and Garden" section.

Virag is a Fellow of the Garden Writers Association and has won that organization's top award for newspaper writing. She is an inspirational public speaker and the author of *Gardening on Long Island with Irene Virag* (Newsday Books, 1999). She teaches Narrative Journalism at Stony Brook University on Long Island.

For more information about the AHS's Great American Gardeners Awards, please contact Jessica Rozmus, Education Programs Coordinator at (703) 768-5700 ext. 137 or jrozmus@ahs.org. Photos are available upon request.

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The American Horticultural Society (AHS), founded in 1922, is an educational, nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization that recognizes and promotes excellence in American horticulture. One of the oldest and most prestigious gardening organizations, AHS is dedicated to **making America a nation of gardeners, a land of gardens**. Its mission is to open the eyes of all Americans to the vital connection between people and plants, to inspire all Americans to become responsible caretakers of the Earth, to celebrate America's diversity through the art and science of horticulture; and to lead this effort by sharing the Society's unique national resources with all Americans.