

September 29, 2006

To TGOA/MGCA Leaders and Members:

Please let me give you the background, as I know it, on the new relationship with the American Horticultural Society.

I was in St. Louis at an AHS sponsored seminar in late July, with Tom Underwood, Acting President of AHS, and Katy Moss Warner, President Emeritus, with whom I worked when we first put our horticulture partnership into effect. Neither of them said anything about any change in our partnership.

After returning home, I was surprised to receive an email from Tom Underwood saying AHS wished to end our relationship, effective 12/31/06. I immediately called Tom to discuss whatever the problem was. He/they were upset that we had made the membership optional, thereby—as he put it—violating our agreement and changing the purpose of our partnership to enhance membership in TGOA/MGCA. I don't believe our purpose was changed at all, but as I explained to him, *we had no choice* but to make AHS membership optional, as we were about to lose individual members and in some cases, whole clubs, if it were not made so.

Fortunately Tom was willing to make a concession for an ongoing partnership with optional AHS membership at \$35 for 2 years or \$45 for 3 years. Actually, *this is not much different* from our original \$15/year and is quite attractive.

I forwarded these emails and my explanation, as above, to Steve Bush and Jim Mack. Jim was out of town when the email arrived so he wasn't able to reply until about a week later. Steve and Bob Young thought it essential to immediately inform club treasurers, whose job it would be to collect dues—that is the reason the information didn't first go quickly to Board members. I am very sorry for this timing.

And I'm more than a little sick inside. The original agreement was carefully worked out with Joe Lamoglia; unfortunately he has since left the organization and is completely out of the picture. I was pleased that we were the *largest* organization ever to have contracted with AHS, and *first* new partner to get \$10/first year, \$12/2nd year and \$15/3rd year—all others have paid \$15/yr/member from the beginning. It costs AHS \$10 to send out the magazine, so we properly agreed to pay the actual extra cost of including our newsletter. And you recall, last November the Board of Directors voted to post the newsletter on our website in 2007, and send two hard copies to each club President to copy for members or to use otherwise. This action was an effort to contain costs, making it possible to reduce regular member dues to \$15.

In my opinion, the AHS partnership with the advantages it offers (the excellent American Gardener magazine, free or reduced admission to 190 national gardens, seed exchanges, the great connections with additional thousands of gardeners, etc.) is essential to our organization's growth—maybe to our survival.

If you agree, I hope you will promote the joint membership options strongly to your clubs.

And remember, dues must be received by Bob Young by Nov. 1 for AHS membership cards to be issued by Jan. 1

Sincerely,  
Honey Barnekoff