



Sowing Miracles

HORACE HAGEDORN, 1915-2005
AMELIA MAIELLO HAGEDORN, 1936-2016

Founders of the Horace and Amy Hagedorn Fund
in



THE NEW YORK
COMMUNITY
TRUST



How the wizard behind Miracle-Gro and his down-to-earth wife became two of Long Island's greatest benefactors.

It was January of 1985. She was a pre-school teacher, recently divorced, living in Great Neck. A friend challenged her to write a personal ad and post it in the local Long Island newspapers. Never shy, she took up her pen.

He was home in Sands Point, eating defrosted pizza after a grueling day, when he spotted her small print ad. His wife had died six months earlier and he had been channeling his grief into work.

"Looking for a Man for All Seasons....," her ad stated. "Winter weather" had left her pining for a "warm-hearted man with a cool head and charming manner."

His curiosity was piqued.

So Horace Hagedorn, the Madison Avenue marketing wiz and wealthy founder of Miracle-Gro, responded to the modest notice posted by Amy Maiello, a Queens-born educator and single mother of four. "Hello Miss Winter," he wrote by hand. "I like your advertising style."

The pair—classic opposites, as it turned out—met. Horace, a political conservative and hard-driving entrepreneur, had spent years spinning the dream of verdant lawns into a billion-dollar corporate venture. Amy, a liberal-minded community activist, drove a beat-up Toyota, clipped coupons, and held an abiding love for touching the lives of others. Within a year, they were married.

GROWING PHILANTHROPY: Horace Hagedorn with the product that helped him and Amy Maiello Hagedorn become major philanthropists. On the cover: Horace and Amy Hagedorn.

**“You can’t keep picking the flowers.
You’ve got to give back.”**

—Horace Hagedorn

NURTURING OTHERS

Amy’s world view quickly had an impact on Horace, who had come of age on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, the child of scrappy entrepreneurial parents (their dress shop would later become Bonwit Teller). He was practical and profit-driven.

Amy had been born into an immigrant home that knew the struggles of the Great Depression. At age 44, recalled her daughter, Lisa Valentine, “she was a rock-star single mother.” Helping others was in her blood. Soon, it was in Horace’s blood too.

Horace died in 2005, at age 89. Amy died in 2016, at 79. The fund they seeded in 1993 at The New York Community Trust has supported a multitude of Long Island causes and given more than \$65 million, through 3,000 or so grants, to more than 500 nonprofit organizations in Nassau and Suffolk counties. (Separately, the Hagedorn Foundation has given more than \$49 million in nearly 700 grants to more than 175 nonprofits whose work also benefits Long Island.)

Today, the Miracle-Gro fortune is nurturing tens of thousands of lives at the grassroots level. Indeed, the passion that Horace and Amy brought to causes like in-home parenting programs, caring for runaways, uplifting immigrants, and bringing better health care and nutrition to poorer communities epitomizes the expression “you reap what you sow.” We hope their story inspires you to work with The Trust to fund causes you care about, and to turn New York dreams into reality.



BIO PIC: The Horace Hagedorn Story: A 2005 documentary film by Ron Rudaitis and Susan Hagedorn.

‘MEET MR. MIRACLE-GRO’

Horace Hagedorn was neither a gardener nor a botanist. But as a tireless entrepreneur with a gift for salesmanship, he had a green thumb for opportunity. His early mentor in the advertising business once told him the trick to becoming a millionaire was to “find a need and fill it.” In postwar America, Horace had only to look around. The country’s suburban sprawl was creating millions of homeowners who yearned for greener grass. It was a postwar lawn-care arms race.



FIRMLY ROOTED: Amy and Horace Hagedorn (center) with their blended family of 10 children and dozens of grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

In the late 1940s, he teamed up with a horticulturist, Otto Stern, and a Rutgers professor, O. Wesley Davidson, to create a water-soluble fertilizer that could be branded and sold nationally. His beloved first wife, Peggy (née Margaret O’Keefe, a hospital administrator who died of cancer in 1984, at age 67), is credited with naming one of the most famous products in the land.

“She came up with the ‘Gro’—it was so late-40s!” said Susan Hagedorn, Horace’s eldest daughter. Success was spotty at first, but Horace was relentless, using brash television ads and eye-popping vegetable-growing contests to put his “miracle” product on the map.

Within two decades, Miracle-Gro was yards and yards ahead of the competition.

“After a while,” Susan said, “it was like, ‘What came first—was it Miracle-Gro or was it suburban lawns?’”

GREAT FORTUNE, GREAT GENEROSITY

The Horace Hagedorn who later in life garnered headlines for his million-dollar donations and dogged advocacy for immigrant rights could not have become such a generous philanthropist if he hadn’t driven himself, his family, and his employees, to cultivate a loyal customer base while preaching frugality and the art of persuasion.

Those years of hard work touting Miracle-Gro’s massive tomatoes and champion roses led to renown and success for the Hagedorn clan. But great fortune truly came in 1995, when The Scotts Company, a gardening business heavyweight, merged with Horace’s enterprise. The deal was, in fact, a coup for Horace, who gained 42 percent of the stock in the new company, *ScottsMiracle-Gro*. He became vice chairman. His eldest son, James, is now chairman and chief executive.

The only cash in the deal was donated directly to The New York Community Trust after

Amy saw an ad in The New York Times about The Trust. The Hagedorns contacted The Trust for a meeting and launched the Horace and Amy Hagedorn Fund. They then joined the board of the Long Island Community Foundation, a division of The Trust.

"To spend this money helping people, doing things that the government can't do—not won't, but can't do—is what we're working for now," Horace once said. Amy, for her part, added: "It was transformative. I became a new person."

SEEDING THE FUTURE

With Amy at his side, Horace poured the same ardor he had for marketing Miracle-Gro into the art and business of philanthropy. Susan said he wanted to be "the same kind of philanthropist that he was entrepreneur."

"Once he was on board with you, he was the best advocate that any community organization could hope for," she said. "He was hands-on, and if organizations thought that Horace Hagedorn was going to just write a check—well, hah—they got *him*! And they loved it. 'I'm going to be your partner now, I'm in business with you, we are doing this together'—that was his message."

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—Susan Hagedorn (daughter)



DOWN TO EARTH: Amy Maiello Hagedorn.

In a 2002 interview in *Distinction* magazine, Horace was asked why he enjoyed giving away money. His answer was Madison Avenue succinct: "You can do good. You can look good. You can feel good."

Horace and Amy's philanthropic style is seen in the thousands of organizations and programs that they have supported: the schools of education and business at Hofstra University; the Hagedorn Cleft Palate and Craniofacial Center in Great Neck; the Hagedorn Little Village School in Bellmore; the Hagedorn Family Resource Center in Hempstead; the Miracle-Gro Kids Programs in Brooklyn and in Columbus, Ohio; and many others.

'SOMETHING TANGIBLE'

"He likes something tangible, filling immediate needs," Amy once said of her husband's approach, while she preferred systemic efforts

“[Horace] likes something tangible, filling immediate needs. I like projects that are more abstract and tackle underlying causes.”

—Amy Hagedorn

that uplifted those being aided. “I like projects that are more abstract and tackle underlying causes,” she explained. An example: She directed \$400,000 a year to civic-engagement efforts focused on helping immigrants become community leaders.

“Amy was about empowerment and investing in people to help them expand their opportunities,” Susan said. “My father liked concrete, liked to have a relationship with people who were served. He was fond of saying ‘You can’t keep taking from the earth without giving back.’”

Horace and Amy developed a profound and thorough understanding of Long Island’s needs, leading them to help organizations that fight for social justice. From backing humble yet much-needed community centers to contributing to the stewardship of Long Island’s beautiful and fragile environment, their holistic approach to philanthropy has touched many thousands of lives.

In summing up the Hagedorns’ charitable work, Amy would hark back to the credo Horace was taught as a young entrepreneur. “Find a need and fill it,” she once wrote. “These words embody the business and philanthropic philosophy that my husband, Horace Hagedorn, and I have lived by.”

Amy and Horace Hagedorn loved Long Island.

They started a fund
in The Trust to improve the
lives of the less fortunate.

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Donors may choose to set up permanent funds that benefit a geographical area, such as New York City or Brooklyn; an issue area, such as education or the environment; or a population, such as children or the elderly.

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