Elvin McDonald love of gardening began at age 3 and by age 14 he was a published author and founder of The Gesneriad Society. He was Senior Editor for Traditional Homes and Executive Editor for Garden and Outdoor Living at Better Homes and Gardens. He has published numerous gardening books. Elvin currently chairs the Historical Gardens Committee at Terrace Hill ( as he has for 15 years ) and was the Friends Director at the Des Moines Botanical Center for almost 6 ½ years. He is currently president of the Des Moines Public Library Foundation. Leadership is second nature to him.

Elvin was instrumental in the successful transfer of the Greater Des Moines Botanical Center from Water Works to the Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden non-profit. To this day he teaches classes at the Botanical Gardens sharing his vast knowledge with all who are interested. He is always willing to answer questions of even novices like me and shares his personal garden with all who are interested. He even cut a circle in his fence at eye level so passersby can view his gorgeous backyard garden.

One of Elvin’s most outstanding characteristics is his civility. With me – and I’ve noticed with others – he is always patient and kind. His humility is especially noteworthy in such an accomplished person.

Elvin has been recognized nationally many times by his peers. The time is right for Sages over 70 to recognize his many contributions to the people of Greater Des Moines.

Allison Fleming