

**MEMORIAL RESOLUTION OF THE FACULTY  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON  
ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR EMERITA JAYA IYER**

Jaya G. Iyer, professor emerita of soil science since 2003, died on May 2, 2012, in Madison, Wisconsin. She was born in 1933 in Mumbai, India. She was awarded B.S., M.S. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Bombay between 1955 and 1959. She enrolled at the University of Wisconsin-Madison for graduate studies in 1960 and earned a M.S. degree in 1962 (“Trace elements, Mn, B, Zn, Cu and Mo, their effect on the growth of trees”) and a Ph.D. in 1968 (“Biocides: their effects on the growth of nursery stock”), both under her academic mentor, Professor Sergius A. Wilde. She joined the Department of Soil Science as a member of the academic staff in 1968 and joined the faculty ranks in 1985. Dean Emeritus Leo Walsh said of her promotion to the faculty that it was one of the best decisions he ever made. She advanced through the academic ranks to become a full professor in 1993.

For nearly 40 years, Jaya was a compassionate and caring academic advisor to countless undergraduate students and a much valued consultant to Midwestern tree nurseries. As a beloved instructor and advisor in soil science, she passed on her love of plants, soil, and the vital connections between them. She brought soil biology prominently into the undergraduate curriculum, a topic that is now appreciated as central to the global challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change. Jaya reorganized and for years taught the laboratory experience associated with the plant nutrient management course, cross-listed among soils, horticulture and agronomy and reaching students of all these majors. Many students felt this was the best laboratory experience of their undergraduate careers. In addition to the many students she taught and mentored, she was a beloved mentor to junior faculty, among them those who are now senior faculty and themselves mentors to another generation. They too were familiar with Jaya’s form of ‘tough love’, a stern look when performance did not fully come up to expectations but forgiveness for human failings as well.

Jaya was an energetic recruiter for the soil science major and visited high schools and career fairs across the state. Her advising talents were acknowledged through the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences Outstanding Advisor Award in 1993 and the Outstanding Advisor Award from MANRRS (Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences) in 1995. Jaya was also an enthusiastic ambassador of soil science to K-12 students and teachers. The first female on the faculty of the Department of Soil Science, Jaya was active in equity issues at the campus level for years.

Beyond campus, Jaya was an expert in plant nutrient management for tree nurseries, assisting both public and private sector growers in Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, and

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Kansas. She not only worked closely with nursery growers in all matters related to soil fertility, but regularly brought practitioners into her classrooms to share their experiential, “real-world” knowledge with students. She was a co-author of two editions of the book ‘Soil and Plant Analysis for Tree Culture’. Her research and outreach work encompassed the dawning of appreciation for the significance of soil mycorrhizae for seedling success and the potential for slow-release fertilizers to reduce water pollution from nurseries. The reforestation of the Lake States has benefited from her research and outreach work.

After the death of her father in 1978, Jaya cared for her mother in Madison. As “Mama’s” health failed, Jaya lovingly cared for her in her home until she died in 2003. Jaya moved to Oakwood Village, Madison, soon after retirement, living there until shortly before her death. During her stay at Agrace Hospice, she was visited by a steady stream of friends, colleagues and former students. She asked one visitor, who had inherited the plant nutrient management class and lab, about the progress of the course and whether a resolution to a troublesome lab problem had been found. She asked another colleague if the fertility reports had been sent to the nurseries, keenly recalling their precise deadline despite not having written a report for over a decade. She was truly committed to teaching and service until the end. Jaya is survived by several cousins in the United States, India and Singapore, and many good friends.

Memorial Committee,  
Prof. Phillip Barak (Chair)  
Prof. Birl Lowery  
Prof. Nicholas Balster