



In Memoriam: Dr. Coit A. Suneson

Coit A. Suneson was a USDA scientist based at Davis, CA, USA for many years. He retired in 1968 and died in 1975.

Coit was an active breeder of oat, wheat, and barley. He developed the first short-statured (oat, barley, rice, wheat, or rye) variety in the U.S. in the 1950s. This was 'Curt' oat. He also pioneered the use of wild oat in breeding, using *Avena fatua*. 'Montezuma' was the main variety from that program.

Suneson was most famous for his 'Evolutionary Breeding concept', based on long-term experience with composite crosses of barley. He developed an oat composite cross based on mutation-enhanced genetic diversity and wild oat.

Coit also discovered and released 'Rapida', a very short and early oat variety. Rapida was used in some Canadian research projects. It was not a grain yield-competitive variety; its claim to fame was its use in California fields of vegetable vine crops. It was interplanted with cucurbits in one of about every 6 rows in the field. Because it headed early, the grower could identify the position of cucurbit rows with these little weedy oat plants as markers to locate the actual planting rows during harvest or other field operations.