

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

December 7, 1968

The Saturday morning session began at 8:30 a.m. in the Ballroom of the Royal York Hotel. Ray Halward served as moderator. Two papers were presented Saturday morning after which the annual business meeting of the Eastern Region was held. The minutes of the business meeting appear at the beginning of the 'Business and Technical Session' of the Eastern Region.

RAY HALWARD: We have a rather relaxed program this morning and being in park work myself I'm particularly interested in our first paper this morning which will be given by Andy Knauer who will discuss "The Small Public Gardens and Their Importance to the Plant Industry."

SMALL PUBLIC GARDENS AND THEIR IMPORTANCE TO THE PLANT INDUSTRY

A. R. KNAUER
Mill Creek Park
Youngstown, Ohio

The small public garden offers to the people of the community which it serves the opportunity to select plants for their own use with relative assurance of success in that area. Selection can be done on a discriminating basis for the merits of the plant are evident even to the casual observer — the shortcomings perhaps only to those with a more critical eye. To the nurseryman, the plant hybridist, the introducer of new or unusual plant, the garden store operator and the mail order merchandiser, the small public garden offers an opportunity for advertising and promotion at relatively low cost. The cost production of a half dozen *Cotoneaster congesta*, pro-rated on a life span of twenty years or more (given an amicable climate), amounts to darn cheap advertising when you consider that perhaps a million or more people will look at it during this period.

There are a number of large well funded gardens across the United States and Canada which do an excellent job of displaying plants in their own right. Many of these are publicly owned, others supported by private means. The character of their financial and administrative structure varies greatly as does the emphasis which they place on the various aspects of their operation. Research into aspects of applied horticulture such as plant propagation and all the various and sundry cultural problems such as insect and disease control, soil requirements, etc., is pursued by these institutions. The more basic investigations into plant physiology, morphology, the never

ending taxonomic problems, genetics and its application-hybridization, creating "genetic banks" for future use, plant introduction, all of these and more are also part of the operation of our large and vitally necessary arboreta and botanical gardens. The Arnold Arboretum, (the granddaddy of them all), the Royal Botanical Gardens at Hamilton, Ontario, National Arboretum at Washington, D. C., the magnificent Longwood Gardens at Kennet Square, Pennsylvania, and the great Morton Arboretum at Lisle, Illinois, just to name a few here in our Eastern Region, are splendid organizations. In addition many Universities maintain study collections of plants on campuses, some of these collections being assembled into a garden area, others as part of their campus landscaping. Then too, the outstanding institutions of the U. S. Department of Agriculture's Plant Station at Beltsville, Maryland and its affiliate stations and the Canadian Department of Agriculture's Ottawa Station and its affiliates carry on intensive research of both applied and basic nature. All of these erudite and progressive entities pursuing subjects vital to all plantmen. But what about Joe Doakes, the homeowner in Kalamazoo, Michigan or Podunk, Illinois. The problem is he has never heard of these places and very likely never will — the ever increasing public relations effort notwithstanding. Once in his life he will certainly happen into a place like the Montreal Botanic Garden, the Missouri Botanical Gardens or perhaps vacationing in the south will blunder into Calloway Gardens at Pine Mountain, Georgia and then realize there are multitudes of plants he had never dreamed of. However, he does not associate what he sees there with what he wants to do with his own back yard.

Now then, he goes into his local park for a picnic or something and he is presented with large masses of trees and shrubs, very nice, very neutral and perhaps you will agree, just a little stilted but, functional and of low maintenance—this much for sure!

Now I don't say that the large gardens don't do a job of displaying plants to the public, some do, some don't, preoccupation with more erudite matters sometimes overshadow this function and more over they are too few and far between. Our parks in the United States on the other hand are woefully bleak as far as the charm and beauty of ornamental plants is concerned. The landscape architect and planners list of functional uses for plants in public areas reads stark and antiseptic to a plantsman's eye — and the home owner too! Functional uses such as screening, erosion control, traffic direction, shade, embellishment of architectural entities, wind breaks and so on and on. Far down this list (I think non-existent on most) is the idea of using plants for their own inherent aesthetic worth, to charm the eye and gladden the heart, to give people hope and faith in the idea that all of man's works do not necessarily terminate in ugliness.

First knowledge comes from sight. Seeing worthwhile or-

namental plants growing in a proper setting does more to awaken an interest than a thousand pictures. One picture, as the old adage has it, is worth a thousand words — words on either the most scholarly level, or the most cleverly contrived glowing phrases, the ultimate products of our great advertising copy writers describing the glories of a newly arrived cultivar. Even a well trained and knowledgeable garden store or retail nursery salesman, may well be suspect by an increasingly cautious buying public. Let Joe Doakes see the plant as it will look in his back yard. What better place to do this than in a public place where lots of people are.

The concept of using plants for their own worth is certainly not new to anyone associated with this organization but how many of us are involved with the planning of public areas. Our Canadian neighbors are very much akin to this idea, in their public parks are gardens of great beauty, with colorful displays of flowers, lovely shrubs and unique and interesting trees — perhaps part of a closer heritage with England. But people are the same everywhere, they need, appreciate and seek out places of beauty — this is axiomatic — a few cases of overt vandalism notwithstanding. And further, once curiosity is aroused and Joe Doakes of Kalamazoo or Po-dunk starts visualizing a group of *Viburnum plicatum* 'Pink Beauty' in his back yard he wants to know more about it; where can he get it, how big does it get, does it get insects or diseases, etc. He will probably even ask on viewing a large well established plant — "is it hardy?"

In the four year operation of the Fellows Riverside Gardens in Mill Creek Park, Youngstown, Ohio, we have averaged approximately 200,000 annual visitors and this year attendance figures approach one quarter of a million. This is not bad considering the garden is about half finished and the entire extent of the place is approximately fifteen acres. Now I can easily be criticized for over-emphasis and even preoccupation with attendance figures. I agree that figures certainly can lie but, I wonder how many of the larger gardens are attracting as much interest to fifteen acres of their grounds? Mill Creek Park occupies over 2,300 acres total, certainly our attendance figures for the gardens include many that just happen in, as a consequence of our location. The gardens are, however, somewhat isolated by natural cliffs, a lake, a city street, an interstate freeway and are at the extreme north end of the park. In effect we are half in the park and half in the city and overlook a lovely park lake at one end and the famous Youngstown steel mills less than one quarter mile away at the other. There are seasonal displays of spring bulbs, summer annuals and autumn chrysanthemums, a wildflower garden, miscellaneous herbaceous perennials, hemerocallis, lilies, a running start on a collection of rhododendrons, a smattering of hollies (thanks to Lanny Pride) and our major collection of over 700 taxa in the genus *Rosa* (a total of about 9,000 rose

plants). These materials "are held together" with a collection of various trees, shrubs and evergreens which lays heavy emphasis on the "new" and unusual as well as what we feel to be the better standard items from the nursery lists. Wherever a certain new cultivar will do a comparable landscape job to a "standard item" we try to employ it in preference.

Progress in building a garden of even this small scale is slow primarily due to finances. Five major construction projects (and three more to come) slow it even further but, after four years of work we are half finished with the basic scheme. With relatively little publicity we enjoy excellent attendance and ever increasing curiosity about the plants in the garden by local residents.

This brings me back to the major premise — that small public gardens located in local parks close at hand, expose more people to good plants than any amount of literature, than the immense and comprehensive collection in a few major arboretums and botanical gardens, than any amount of persuasive salesmanship — than any other means presently employed.

So what can be done, if anything, to encourage such developments? Well it seems to me that organizations such as the American Horticulture Society the American Nurseryman's Association, the International Shade Tree Conference, the various equipment manufacturing and agricultural chemical industries, the florists and their respective organizations as well, have a real financial stake in this. It is not beyond the realm of possibility for these organizations to band together in the promotion of Horticultural Fairs as is done in Europe. Sites could be selected with the prior commitment of a local entity (parks, etc.) to not only cooperate in providing space for such an activity, but also they could, I believe, be asked to provide some of the site preparation and, of course, the continued maintenance of the area once the fair is over. Individual nurserymen, hard good manufactures, chemical companies, etc. could reserve certain areas for their use in promoting and selling their products and assume responsibility for landscaping that area in general accordance with an overall scheme which will then become a permanent display garden once the exposition is over.

Many organizations would want to schedule their major annual meetings at or near such a function. The public relations effect for the entire industry would be immense. The impact on the economy of the communities involved — dollars that is — would do wonders in impressing the people of that area of the worth of plants. Above all the gift of a collection of the outstanding plants of the day remaining there could be of immeasurable worth for years to come.

This sort of activity, I believe, is long overdue especially in view of the declining amount of "gardens" in our traditional late winter Home and Garden Shows which increasingly

feature household products. People go to them, for the gardens not the gimmicks" — well just give them a chance to buy the garden.

RALPH SHUGERT: On one of the slides you were showing I noticed steel mills in the background and I was wondering if you had any problems with air pollution?

ANDY KNAUER: The amount of damage we have seen by unknown causes (let's put it that way) have been very minor. But to be very frank about this our prevailing winds are from the southwest and the steel mills are located north of the garden and so any pollutants would be carried primarily away from the garden.

LESLIE HANCOCK: I would like to make a few comments about this problem of pollution in public gardens. Since they are public gardens they must be located where the population is and of course where the factories are.

The past few years I have noticed this pollution problem and have observed that the damage appears to be worse in dry years than in wet years and I have developed the idea that if we could spray just good pure water on the foliage of the plants in these gardens we would prevent a lot of the damage of pollution in our public gardens. In drought years this material just continues to build up on the leaves of the plants and we get more damage; I've often felt that this is one of the main reasons that we can't grow conifers in the city as well as deciduous materials.

ANDY KNAUER: Although I have just had four years of experience with this garden I have come to the conclusion that quite often we tend to use air pollution as an excuse for poor cultural practices. I don't mean to minimize the problem of air pollution because it is a problem and it is with us but I do think at times we tend to use it as an excuse.

JIM WELLS: I think your absolutely correct about this air pollution Andy, though I do live in a Metropolitan area and we do have some rather thick days I don't think this air pollution is a problem other people would like to make it. I spent a part of my boyhood outside London where Kew Gardens are and at that time we often had what we used to call a "pea-souper." This is a London fog such that when you put your hand out you couldn't see it. When the fog lifted after one, two or three days the whole of the country side was covered with soot and this is where the Kew Botanical Gardens are and have been for 200 odd years. So I don't really think it is the problem we often like to make it.

FRED LANPHEAR: Too often we tend to think that air pollution is something we can see such as smoke but air pollution may often not be visible, there is considerable evidence that there is increased injury to plants from air pollution in cities. Lilac, which has always been considered tolerant of city conditions, has often recently been showing up with symptoms contributed to air pollution particularly ozone which is one of

the more serious problems of air pollution. So I think we shouldn't underestimate the problem of air pollution because it is becoming more serious and we're going to have to keep our eyes on it.

RAY HALWARD: Coming from a steel town from the south I think we have two problems; we take air pollution out and put water pollution on and I'm not sure which is worse. Our next speaker James Wells is one of our oldest and most valued members and he is what I would consider a controversial figure because he's always in there punching and this is what makes these meetings. It gives me great pleasure to introduce Jim Wells who will tell us what a British propagator is.

WHAT IS A BRITISH PROPAGATOR?

JAMES S. WELLS

Wells Nursery

Red Bank, New Jersey

The other day I was quietly eating my lunch when the phone rang. It was Dave Dugan requesting that I give this talk. It was my own fault, of course, because I had written to him suggesting that he was producing a mystery program. You would have thought after all these years that I would have learned to keep my mouth shut.

You may know by now that a British Region of I.P.P.S. has come into being and that we are to discuss this in the business meeting. As a prelude Dave thought it would be a good idea for me to try to tell you what a British propagator is. I must own this request set me back momentarily and when he went on to add that I was the only British propagator that many of the members had ever met, I was quite frankly stumped. So in order to get off the phone and finish my lunch, I agreed.

My first reaction was, of course, that there is no difference and fundamentally this is true. At the recent meeting which I had the pleasure of attending in England it was abundantly clear that put a "gaggle" of propagators together in a room in England or America and the net result is precisely the same. We're all interested in plants, we're all interested in techniques, we're all interested in the day to day problems which each of us has. So in this broad sense there just is no difference.

But then I went on to think a little closer and I realized that there were a few minor differences which could be pointed out because they will inevitably effect the development and the emphasis of the British Region and quite rightly so, too. The average English nursery is far more interested in individual plant varieties than its counterpart over here and this is because the average English customer is keenly interested in the difference between a Rhodendron 'Cynthia' and Rhododen-