

# AMERICAN HORTICULTURIST

NEWS EDITION MAY 1982



Jo Ann and Julian Ganz, Jr. Collection

The Bounties of Nature, oil on canvas c. 1867 by William Mason Brown—to be included in an exhibition featuring floral subjects at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. For more information see Calendar on page 4.

## River Farm Notes—1982 Seed Program Report

As we stand here on the brink of spring, anxiously awaiting the annual transformation of our surroundings, it is very tempting to let our minds wander to visions of tulips, daffodils and similar delights, but there are other things to think about. It is time to decide what to plant and where to plant it. It is time to think about those little products of fertilization from which are grown the mighty oak and the delicate pansy, alike—those tiny, ripened ovules, those miracles of life

that we so simply refer to as seeds.

Let's be honest. For the past several months we have all spent valuable time with our noses wedged between the pages of our favorite seed catalogs, drooling over those special items that we absolutely must have for this planting site or that. The subject of seeds should bring another thought to the minds of members of the American Horticultural Society—our annual free seed program. The overwhelming response from our 1982 mailing thus far indi-

cates that many of you spent time poring over this year's list and making decisions. Our thanks to all of you who have participated thus far and to those of you who haven't sent in your order blank, there is still time to participate.

This year's program deserves mention for several very important reasons. First, as the story unfolds many of you will realize that the plants included were suggested to us by you. Second, you also will find that we have taken your counsel to



heart in another area and have pursued collection of these seed per your very helpful instructions. In other words, this program deserves mention because it is you who have made it what it is.

I must emphasize that we have not yet achieved all that we are capable of, as many of you will agree, but we *have* taken some dramatic steps toward giving our program much-needed life.

Our primary endeavor for the 1982 program was to increase both the number of selections we have to offer you and also to make these selections much more diverse and meaningful. From last year's total of 41 selections, (24 annuals and biennials, 16 perennials and one tree), we have progressed to a total of 174 selections. There are 59 annuals and biennials, 68 perennials, eight vegetables and 39 trees and shrubs on

this year's list. As to diversity, this year we offer the seed of a calla lily that is not on the market, and is the product of 20 years of crosses made by a well-known California hybridizer. We have the seed of grass-of-Parnassus, collected by a Society member from the edge of a Georgia lake, and the Humbolt lily, collected by another member on the side of a California mountain at an elevation of 4,000 feet. From a member in Salem, Virginia we have butterfly weed that comes from a mother plant that grew from the seed of an earlier AHS seed program. From an arboretum in Illinois and another in Minnesota we received such beauties as the Peking tree lilac, blue ash, fringe tree, meadow rue and plantain lily, and from the Yosemite National Park area a California member has sent us seed that includes the Western red bud, flowering ash and big leaf maple. Public gardens in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, Lorton, Virginia and Memphis, Tennessee donated such plants as wild columbine, Korean evodia, seaside goldenrod and a rare form of the sea hollyhock. From a long list of this nation's most prestigious seed companies we have received a fantastic collection of seed including a dahlia, five different lupines, passion flower, monkey flower, dianthus, Chinese cabbage, a zinnia, a browallia and false Solomon's seal. We also have received a whole host of rare geranium seed from the Geranium Society, and from a number of members' back yards we have received ginkgo, sweet bay, Japanese tree lilac, blackberry lily, Montezuma bald cypress, mock orange, black locust, Japanese pagoda tree, and many, many others. A government plant introduction station has again donated seed of the coveted Franklin tree. Here at River Farm we collected seed of such favorites as southern magnolia, golden rain tree and the chaste tree.

By now you have received your seed program brochure, and many of you already have let us know which plants you wish to receive. When germinating your seed and growing your plants, please remember all of those who have made this program possible. We owe a debt of gratitude to all who have given of

themselves (and of their favorite plants) so we might enjoy the fascination that accompanies growing plants from seed. Our contributors are listed below; we thank you, each and every one.

#### SOCIETIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

- Dixon Gallery & Gardens, 4339 Park Avenue, Memphis, TN 38117.  
U.S. Plant Introduction Station, PO Box 88, Glenn Dale, MD 20769.  
Gunston Hall Plantation, Lorton, VA 22079.  
University of Minnesota, Landscape Arboretum, 3675 Arboretum Drive, Chaska, MN 55318.  
Brandywine Conservancy, PO Box 141, Chadds Ford, PA 19317.  
International Geranium Society Seed Exchange, Mrs. Rusty McKilligan, 1442 No. Gordon Street, Hollywood, CA 90028, (write for membership & sample publication information).  
The Morton Arboretum, Lisle, Illinois 60532.

#### SEED COMPANIES

- W. Atlee Burpee Company, 300 Park Avenue, Warminster, PA 18974.  
Goldsmith Seeds, Inc., PO Box 1349, Gilroy, CA 95020.  
Applewood Seed Company, 833 Parfait Street, Lakewood, CO 80215.  
Environmental Seed Producers, Inc., PO Box 5904, El Monte, CA 91734.  
Herbst Brothers Seedsmen, Inc., 1000 N. Main Street, Brewster, NY 10509.  
Daystar, R.F.D. 2, Litchfield, ME 04350.  
George J. Ball Seed Company, PO Box 335, West Chicago, IL 60185.  
Pan American Seed Company, PO Box 438, West Chicago, IL 60185.

#### INDIVIDUALS

- Mr. M. Browning Combs, Grand Prairie, TX.  
Mr. Robert Dureson, Los Angeles, CA.  
Mr. Carl D. Stephens, Yosemite National Park, CA.  
Mrs. Malcolm Matheson, Jr., (Chairwoman, Friends of River Farm), Mt. Vernon, VA.  
Mrs. E. C. Steiner, Buxton, MD.  
Mr. Edward R. Rasmussen, Omaha, NE.  
Dr. William L. Giles, Starville, MS.  
Mrs. E. Everson Evans, Framingham, MA.  
Mr. Bill Morse, Atlanta, GA.  
Mr. Chester F. Nave, Pacifica, CA.  
Mr. Sam P. Eastman, Dutch Flat, CA.  
Mr. Heyward H. Horry, Salem, VA.  
Mrs. Donald W. Angel, Alexandria, VA.  
Mrs. John F. Hauber, Alexandria, VA.

A final note: This has been our first attempt at soliciting the combined participation of other plant societies, public gardens and arboreta, seed companies and most important of all —our own members in the seed collecting aspect of our program. We are so overwhelmed with the response that we are going

## AMERICAN HORTICULTURIST

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#### PUBLICATIONS DIRECTOR

Judy Powell

#### EDITOR

Barbara W. Ellis

#### ART DIRECTOR

Rebecca K. McClimans

#### EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Jane Steffey

Address all Society correspondence to:  
American Horticultural Society  
Box 0105  
Mount Vernon, Virginia 22121

Address all editorial correspondence to:  
The Editor, American Horticulturist  
American Horticultural Society  
Box 0105  
Mount Vernon, Virginia 22121

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to build next year's program around this combined approach. If you think you might have seed available for donation to next year's program (enough to fill at least 100 requests), or know of someone else who might, please write to me in care of the Society. We have already re-

ceived our first seed for 1983. Remember, even if there is only enough seed for a few of our members to enjoy—let us not deprive those few of that enjoyment.

With your help next year's program will be even better.

—Steve Davis

## 37th Annual Meeting to Be in Cincinnati

It is already time to start making plans to join Society members for our 1982 Annual Meeting. This year we will be meeting in Cincinnati, and participants will have the opportunity to tour some of that city's loveliest gardens, take a river boat cruise on the historic Ohio River and attend the annual President's banquet where the Society's coveted annual awards will be presented. Join us in Cincinnati from September 29 through October 3.

Our stay in Cincinnati begins with an elegant cocktail reception at Eden Park's Krohn Conservatory, which has been described as one of the most well designed greenhouses in the country. With a total of 22,000 square feet under glass, this conservatory has separate wings devoted to palms, cacti, ferns and orchids. Our hosts for this evening will be the Cincinnati Park Board Volunteers.

Thursday, September 30, we will spend the day touring the city. Scheduled are visits to Mount Airy Forest, Sooty Acres Botanical Garden and the Greater Cincinnati Civic Garden Center. The day will be topped off by dinner and a cruise on the Betty Blake River Boat.

Friday morning will be spent in the first of the meeting's two Educational Sessions. We will spend the afternoon touring Cincinnati's famous Zoological Gardens and have tea at the Cincinnati Art Museum Garden.

During Saturday's Educational Sessions, to be held after the Society's Plenary and Business Session, we will learn about Cincinnati's unique Adopt-A-Plot Garden program. After lunch and a walking tour through Lytle Park to the Taft Museum, we will board buses and tour two private gardens before visiting the Adopt-A-Plot gardens in Ault Park. These interesting gardens

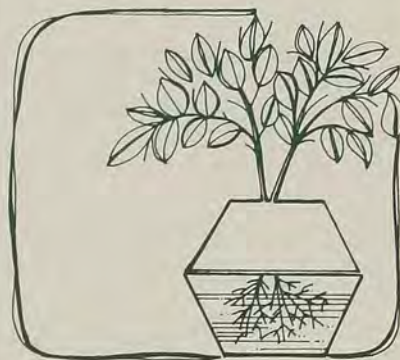
were planned to replace a rose garden the city of Cincinnati could no longer afford to maintain. They are entirely designed and maintained by volunteers. Saturday evening we will top off our Annual Meeting with a no-host cocktail reception and rare plant auction at the Westin Hotel, the President's Banquet and our annual Awards ceremony.

After the Annual Meeting members will have the opportunity to participate in our post meeting tour of Kentucky, North Carolina and Tennessee from October 3 through 13. In Kentucky's famed Bluegrass Country participants will visit Spendthrift Horse Farm, several private gardens in Lexington as well as Henry Clay's home, Ashland, and Hopemont, the Hunt-Morgan home, which has a restored Georgian garden. Our visit to Lexington will be followed by a leisurely drive through Daniel Boone National Forest and the Cumberland Gap to the Smokies. The autumn foliage should be breathtaking at this time of year. Once in North Carolina participants will visit the Biltmore House and Gardens and the Botanical Gardens of the University of North Carolina before leaving for Tennessee. Cheekwood, the Tennessee Botanical Garden and Fine Arts Center, The Hermitage, home of Andrew Jackson and the Bernheim Forest Arboretum and Nature Center are just three of the stops scheduled in this state.

Please put these dates on your calendar now and plan to join us in Cincinnati for our 37th Annual Meeting. Look for registration materials in the July issue of *American Horticulturist* news. Brochures are now available for the post meeting tour of Kentucky, North Carolina and Tennessee. Write to Dorothy Sowerby in care of the Society for information.

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# CALENDAR

## May 1

30th Anniversary of Historic Annapolis  
Tour of eight private gardens and William  
Paca Garden Annapolis, Maryland  
Information: Historic Annapolis, Inc. Tour  
Office, 18 Pinkney Street, Annapolis, MD  
21401, (301) 267-8149, weekends  
(301) 263-5553

## May 1

Brandywine River Museum Wildflower Plant  
and Seed Sale  
Brandywine River Museum Courtyard  
Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania  
Time: 9:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

## May 6-8

Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes  
Conference  
Old Salem  
Winston-Salem, North Carolina  
Information: Department of Education and  
Interpretation, Old Salem, Inc., Drawer F,  
Salem Station, Winston-Salem, NC 27108,  
(919) 723-3688

## May 6-9

American Rhododendron Society Annual  
Convention  
National 4-H Center  
Bethesda, Maryland  
Information: Bruno A. Kaelin, 5432 Summit  
Street, Centreville, VA 22020,  
(703) 830-2656

## May 11-13

International Rhododendron Conference  
Royal Botanic Gardens  
Edinburgh, Scotland

## May 15

Horticultural Renaissance Day  
St. Paul Landmark Center  
St. Paul, Minnesota  
Information: Minnesota State Horticultural  
Society, 161 Alderman Hall, 1970 Folwell  
Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55108  
(612) 373-1031

## May 15-16

Fullerton Arboretum "Green Scene"  
Fullerton Arboretum  
Fullerton, California  
Hours: 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.  
Information: Fullerton Arboretum, c/o Cali-  
fornia State University, Fullerton, CA  
92632, (714) 773-3579

## May 16, Rain Date May 23

Spring Open House  
American Horticultural Society  
River Farm  
Mt. Vernon, Virginia  
Information: Phone or write Dorothy Sow-  
erby at the Society

## May 19-21

Royal Horticultural Society Chelsea Show  
Chelsea, London  
Information: The Royal Horticultural Society,  
Vincent Square, London, England SW1P  
2PE, Telephone 01-834-4333

## May 20

Herb Day  
Potomac Unit, The Herb Society of America  
National Herb Garden  
United States National Arboretum  
24th and R Streets, N.E.  
Washington, D.C.  
Hours: 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

## May 20-21

Third Annual Menninger Flowering Tree  
Conference  
Quality Inn, Cypress Gardens  
Winter Haven, Florida  
Information: Florida Nurserymen and Grow-  
ers Association, P.O. Box 16796, Temple  
Terrace, FL 33687, (813) 985-8511

## June 3-6

National Association for Olmsted Parks  
Third Annual Conference  
Theme: Olmsted and the Historic Landscape  
Chicago, Illinois  
Information: Sandra L. Higgins, Conference  
Coordinator, 53 West Jackson Blvd., Chi-  
cago, IL 60604, (312) 922-3307

## June 14-17

Society for Economic Botany 23rd Annual  
Meeting  
University of Alabama  
University, Alabama  
Information: C. Earle Smith, Jr., Anthropol-  
ogy, Box 6135, University of Alabama,  
University, AL 35486

## June 16-21

American Association of Botanical Gardens  
and Arboreta  
Annual Meeting  
Vassar College  
Poughkeepsie, New York  
Information: Janice Claiborne, AABGA Reg-  
istration, The Cary Arboretum, Box AB,  
Millbrook, NY 12545, (914) 677-5343

## June 24-26

American Bonsai Society 15th Annual  
Symposium  
University of Maryland  
Center of Adult Education  
College Park, Maryland  
Information: American Bonsai Society, P.O.  
Box 358, Keene, New Hampshire 03431

## June 30-July 3

American Gloxinia and Gesneriad Society  
26th Annual Convention  
Hyatt Hotel  
Sarasota, Florida  
Information: Dr. Elinor Crawford, 2914 Tan-  
glewood Drive, Sarasota, FL 33577

## July 5-9

Plant Growth Regulator Society of America  
Annual Meeting  
Asilomar Conference Center  
Monterey, California  
Information: David Parrish, Agronomy De-  
partment, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA  
24061

## July 7-September 26

Los Angeles County Museum of Art Exhibi-  
tion of 19th Century American Paintings  
Of the 100 19th-century works by American  
artists in the exhibition, 80 are of floral  
subjects.

## Dates to Remember

We are all looking forward to our **Spring Open House**, scheduled for Sunday, May 16 (rain date Sunday, May 23) from 12:00 to 4:00 p.m. This year's plans include a plant sale to benefit the landscape fund, exhibits by area artists and craftsmen, displays by area plant societies, tours of the garden and a gardening question and answer service. Come and enjoy River Farm's display, and bring your family and friends.

This spring and summer members will be given the opportunity to visit gardens and interesting natural areas all over the globe on Society-spon-

sored tours. From May 26 through June 9 members will be able to tour **Ecuador and the Galapagos**. Don't miss this opportunity to visit the beautiful city of Quito high in the Andes, Otavalo and Cuenca with their interesting Indian markets, and the city of Quayaquil before cruising to the Galapagos Islands for a seven-day tour.

Take a **Grand European Holiday** from June 7 through 20. This exciting tour begins in Switzerland, where participants will be given the opportunity to visit several of that country's most beautiful gardens be-



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Name of current insurance company \_\_\_\_\_

Date present insurance expires Mo. \_\_\_\_\_ Yr. \_\_\_\_\_ Employer \_\_\_\_\_ Yrs. \_\_\_\_\_

Title/Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Yrs. \_\_\_\_\_

If in present occupation less than 2 yrs. or retired, give former occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Years at current address \_\_\_\_\_ Previously insured by GEICO: Yes ☐ No ☐

If student away at school, give distance from home  
miles

	CAR 1	CAR 2	CAR 3
Year & Make (Buick, Dodge, etc.)			
Model (Skylark, Omni, etc.)			
Body type: 2 dr., Sta. Wag., etc.			
No. of cylinders			
Est. Total Mileage			
Est. Annual Mileage			
Days per week driven to work, school or depot			
One way distance			
Is car used in business except to/from work?*			
Car location if different than mail address: City/State			

\*If "yes" explain \_\_\_\_\_

List All Drivers	Relation (Self)	Birthdate		Marital Status	M or F	Occupation	Percent of Use			Driver Training		Years Driving	Accidents in Past 5 years*		Traffic Convictions in Past 3 Years*		License Suspension*	
		Mo.	Day				Yr.	Car 1	Car 2	Car 3	Yes		No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

\*For accidents, traffic convictions, or license suspension, give dates and complete details, including cost of damages, on a separate sheet. Check for information on Homeowners Insurance ☐ Boatowners Insurance ☐ Auto Insurance not available in New Jersey or Massachusetts.





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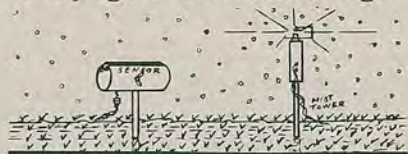
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1. AQUAMONITOR's sensor is placed in the cutting seed bed. Its automatic multi-level mist is unique and unequalled.
2. All system adjustments are at the sensor, handy for "hardening off". You save time, steps and avoid moving plants.
3. Mist blasts can be set for 1/10 second up to 100 and more.
4. AQUAMONITOR is exceedingly stable and reliable in or outdoors. The sensor is self cleaned automatically.
5. It costs nothing to install or move. It is pre-wired, pre-plumbed, plug in, pull out, hand fitted and portable.
6. It is amazingly easy to operate and adjust. Once set, it can be left pretty much alone until "hardening off".
7. One kit can operate a single nozzle or as many as 150. Power is less than two watts. Multi-kit installations cost less and provide better control.
8. It is rugged, durable, trouble free, safe, dependable, solid state and has little wear or upkeep. The first kits sold 11 years ago are operating today.

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**AQUAMONITOR**

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fore boarding the specially chartered *Nostalgic Orient Express* for the trip to the Italian port of Portofino. (See the August issue of *American Horticulturist* for more information on Swiss gardens.) Once there they will board the ship *World Discoverer* for a tour of Mediterranean castles and gardens from Italy to Spain and north along the Atlantic coast to Lisbon.

From July 7 to July 21 members will be enjoying **Mountain Flora and the Colorado Rockies** on a tour that will visit the Denver Botanic Garden (see Bernice Peterson's article, "Denver: Tropics to Tundra," in the April, 1981 issue of *American Horticulturist* for more information about this interesting garden). Also scheduled are visits to Aspen, Vail, Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado Springs and Pikes Peak.

This year members will again have the opportunity to spend **Autumn in England** on a tour from September 9 through 23. Wisley, The Royal Horticultural Society's famed showplace, Alan Bloom's Bressingham Nurseries and the Royal Horticultural Society's Great Autumn Show are just three of the stops on this exciting trip. See Valerie Samson's article in the June, 1981 issue of *American Horticulturist* for more information on what to

expect from autumn in England.

September also brings an opportunity for members to tour mainland China. From September 7 through 30 join AHS members and tour **China and the Grand Canal**. After a short stay in Tokyo, Japan, participants will travel to Peking and visit the famed Great Wall and Forbidden City. The highlight of this exciting trip will be a seven-day cruise on China's Grand Canal.

From September 29 to October 3 Society members will be meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio for the **American Horticultural Society 37th Annual Meeting**. See page 3 of this newsletter for more information on this important meeting and the post meeting tour of **Kentucky, North Carolina and Tennessee**, from October 3 to 13.

Finally, this fall members will again be invited to participate in one of the Society's most popular tours. Spend **Autumn in the Orient** from November 1 through 17 touring the most celebrated public and private gardens in Japan. The itinerary for this exciting tour includes stops in Tokyo, Kyoto, Kobe and a visit to Mount Fuji.

For more information, brochures and reservation cards for any of the above activities, write to Dorothy Sowerby in care of the Society.

## Copies of One More Back Issue Needed

Our thanks to all the members who helped us out by sending copies of the back issues of *American Horticulturist* requested in January's news edition. Our October, 1981 issue has also been much more popular than we had expected, and our in-

ventory of that issue is completely exhausted. Please send any extra or unwanted copies of that issue to Assistants to the Editor, American Horticultural Society, P.O. Box 0105, Mt. Vernon, VA 22121. We will reimburse you for postage.

## A Bug Too Snug In a Skin It Can't Shrug

A new class of chemical compounds keeps the larva of the milkweed bug literally a prisoner in its own outer "skin," preventing the insect from molting into the next larval stage or into an adult.

"The new compounds have a different mode of action on the insect's own chemical system than other insect growth regulators we've tested," says Albert B. DeMilo, Agricultural

Research Service research chemist, Beltsville, Md.

DeMilo synthesized about 70 variations (analogs) of chemical compounds called substituted thiosemicarbazones of 2-acetylpyridine. Colleagues Thomas J. Kelly, ARS physiologist, and Robert E. Redfern, ARS entomologist, then studied their effects on insect development and fertility. About 12 of the analogs



kept the milkweed bug larvae locked in their old outer "skins," or cuticles, even though each had grown to normal size and produced a new cuticle under the old. The larvae literally rolled over and died several days after they were due to molt.

The thiosemicarbazones may have potential as insecticides if they are found active against serious insect pests. (The milkweed bug, a North American insect, is not a serious pest, but is useful in research because it is easily reared in the laboratory.) In preliminary tests, the active analogs caused some molting and growth problems in the larvae of two widely unrelated types of insects—fall armyworms and houseflies, but more testing is needed, DeMilo says.

Also, analogs that work at far lower doses would be needed. A dose of 10 micrograms of the most active analog was required to kill

the milkweed bug larvae. However, that dose is still 1,000 times higher than the active dose of a commercial insecticide, diflubenzuron (Dimilin), which also acts on the larval stage. Diflubenzuron kills a wide variety of insects by interfering with the formation of a new cuticle.

The search for more effective analogs is continuing, and with a clearer direction. DeMilo now knows which areas of the molecule can be modified to improve its biological effectiveness so he will concentrate his future efforts in this direction.

Whether or not the thiosemicarbazones will become useful for insect control is still to be determined, but DeMilo says they already have proven useful in studying the role of molting hormones in the bug's normal development.

—Judy McBride  
*Agricultural Research*

## A New Idea for Vertical Gardens



Living Wall Garden Company

Wall model gardens, like these pictured here, are perfect for small spaces, easy to care for and last for years with proper care.

Normally, gardens are designed and grown horizontally, but a new line of products, called Living Walls™, will allow a gardener to grow a garden vertically, just as if the plants were growing out of an actual wall. Steve Davis, the Society's Director of Grounds and Buildings, and I had the opportunity to see these "walls" in use on a recent trip to Rochester, New York, where they are manufactured. After a tour of the greenhouse, where a wide variety of annuals, flowering and foliage house

plants, vegetables and herbs were growing in Living Walls™ of all shapes and sizes, we were as excited about this new idea as its creator, Wess Moffat. But before describing a few of their almost limitless uses, let me describe how these new "walls" are constructed and how they function.

Living Walls™ are long, narrow walls constructed of fiber glass that are filled with a soilless growing medium. There are also several cylindrical models, available in several

**NEW!**

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The  
Complete Reference Guide  
By  
Mildred L. Thompson  
and  
Edward J. Thompson



9" x 12" 384 pages Over 2450 varieties  
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sizes, so a gardener could grow either a tall column of plants or a long wall of them. In both cases the plants are planted and grown in holes on the sides of the walls that are covered with removable cover slips to prevent the soil from falling out until planting time. The cover slips are removed as the individual planting spaces are planted. The gardens can be planted with either small plants (less than 2 1/2 x 2 1/2-inch-pot size) or seeds.

The Living Wall™ kits come with detailed plant spacing guides since there are generally more planting spaces than you will need to use. The kit also contains an irrigator or a watering cup, depending on the model, extensive assembly instructions, slow release fertilizer and all of the pieces necessary for assembly. Casters are also available for several of the smaller gardens so they can be easily rolled about.

The benefits of this new system are readily apparent to those of us who garden on tiny, narrow strips of land, on apartment balconies and in greenhouses or on windowsills. The wall models, which are available in several different lengths, are about eight inches wide, and plants can be planted on either or both sides as well as on the top. The small, cylindrical models are easy to move around, and, when planted with flowers, they can be used as a very attractive, portable display.

Moffat has grown a wide variety of plants in his Living Walls™. On the cold, wintery day we visited his demonstration greenhouse he was growing African violets, philodendrons, several species of *Asparagus*, tomatoes, cabbage, wax begonias, poinsettias, baby tears, cyclamen and an assortment of foliage plants in a variety of Living Wall™ models. He was even growing a wall of lettuce under artificial light in a workroom attached to the greenhouse.

Space savings is not the only benefit of this system. Since the "walls" are filled with soilless growing medium the problem of disease is greatly reduced, weeds and weeding are no longer a problem, and the wall concept eliminates the need to do the traditional digging, hoeing and bending chores of the conventional garden.

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For a colorful brochure on Living Wall™ gardens and their uses as well as a complete price list and description of the models available, write Living Wall™ Garden Company, R.D. #3, Naples, NY 14512, (716) 374-2340.

—Barbara W. Ellis

## Crop of Vegetables From Containers

Gardeners who grow, or would like to grow, a vegetable garden in containers on a balcony, terrace, fire escape or even an abandoned strip of blacktop in the city will benefit from the experience of horticulturist Pardon Cornell, who has grown a series of experimental container grown gardens. Cornell, employed at the Bristol County Cooperative Extension Service in Segreganset, Massachusetts, has developed a method for growing a garden in containers that will produce a bumper crop of vegetables. In fact, he has been able to equal or out-produce the yields of a conventionally grown garden.

Cornell's garden is grown entirely in two- and five-gallon black plastic containers. Over the years he has found that one-gallon containers do not produce well, probably because they do not allow the growing plants enough root room, and during the hot summer the temperature of the soil fluctuates too much because of the small soil volume.

All of the plants are grown in a prepared, soilless mix. Cornell uses Pro Mix-B, but any of the other commercially available mixes, such as Jiffy mix, would be acceptable. These commercially prepared mixes generally contain 50 percent peat and 50 percent perlite or vermiculite as well as fertilizer, trace elements, lime and a wetting agent. Even with the wetting agent they can be difficult to wet the first time. Cornell recommends wetting the mix before filling the pots, because the mixture has a tendency to wash out the bottom of the pots if you try to wet it after they have been filled. "Perhaps the most satisfactory method of wetting the mix is to spread out a pile

on the work bench," says Cornell. "Create a water reservoir on top of the pile and sprinkle water with a watering can into the reservoir. Then take your hands and rub, wet and rub until finally the task will be accomplished. Fill the pots, but save about one-fourth of the wet mix on the bench. Put some dry mix on the wet, sprinkle with water and you are 'off to the races' again."

Cornell sets all of his containers on white plastic mulch. In his first container-grown garden he used black plastic mulch, but he found the heat buildup in mid-summer was so great that it killed the pollen on most of his melon plants. As a result, the plants only bore fruit directly above the pots where they received some protection from the heat. Although weeds growing under the white plastic can make the surface very lumpy, heat buildup is no longer a problem. Since there is no root competition, Cornell has found that the individual pots can be pushed quite closely together.

In a container-grown garden like Cornell's, "watering daily is an absolute must," he says. "If you don't do it your garden will fail." Although initially he used an automatic watering system consisting of plastic hose and small "spaghetti" tubes leading to each pot, as the season progressed he also did a great deal of hand watering.

According to Cornell, daily watering is important for two reasons. First, it serves to wash away salts that might build up in the container. Second, it helps keep the plants cool during the hot summer months.

A garden grown in containers in a soilless mix must be fertilized once a



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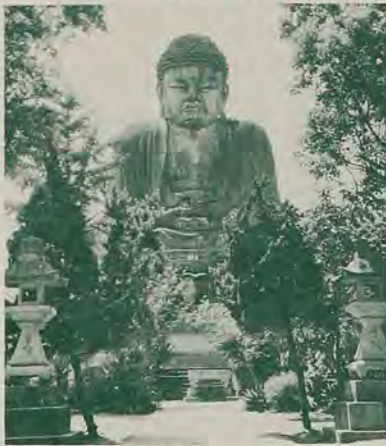
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week beginning about two weeks after the sets are planted in the pots. Cornell uses a hozone proportioner to apply 12 ounces of 20-20-20 water-soluble fertilizer per 48 gallons of water. To feed a garden in this manner first make a concentrated fertilizer solution by mixing 12 ounces of fertilizer in a three gallon bucket of water. Screw the proportioner onto the faucet and then attach your garden hose to it. When you turn on the hose to water the plants it will siphon one gallon of the concentrated fertilizer solution per 16 gallons of water, thus applying the fertilizer in the correct proportion.

Cornell reports little in the way of disease or insect problems in his container-grown gardens. It is necessary to provide stakes and support wire for the plants. He found that sweet corn becomes a bit top heavy when grown in five gallon pots, and

he used a string to tie it to a support wire. When they fruited, cucumbers and cantaloupes growing up stakes and along wires were supported by slings made of old panty hose.

Cornell has grown 50 different species and cultivars of vegetables and herbs using this method. They include cucumbers, peas, tomatoes, lettuce, celery, sweet corn, broccoli, potatoes, sweet basil, thyme, anise, sage, caraway and sweet marjoram. In a 200-square-foot garden he was able to produce 217.9 pounds of food in 105 days. In another experiment he raised 174 pounds of potatoes in 72 square feet of growing space.

Fertilizer, plastic pots, soilless mix and Hozone proportioners should be available from a local nursery or garden center. They are also available by mail from Barrington Industries, P.O. Box 133, Barrington, IL 60010.

## Daffodil Foliage Trial Results

The Royal Horticultural Society, in their May, 1981 issue of *The Garden*, has published the results of a long term trial designed to determine the best time to cut down daffodil foliage after flowering. The trial was conducted at Wisley over a period of 10 years, and it compared the performance of 15 cultivars of daffodils whose foliage was cut down at various intervals after the plants had flowered.

Four rows of 25 bulbs of each cultivar were planted. The first row served as a control, so each year the foliage was left on the plants and allowed to die a natural death. Each cultivar in row two was cut down two weeks after flowering, row three, four weeks and row four, six weeks.

H. A. Kingdom, the chairman of the R.H.S. Narcissus and Tulip Committee, evaluated the plantings using a simple five-point scale (representing very good, good, average, poor, very poor and non-existent). In addition to counting the flowers

produced, Mr. Kingdom considered the quality and strength of the foliage as well as the number of bulbs still in existence. The plantings were evaluated in 1975 and again at the end of trial. See chart below for the results.

According to Mr. Kingdom the conclusions are much as most of us would have expected. "Cutting down a fortnight after flowering is almost totally destructive (and I suspect tying foliage in knots equally so), so you will be popular with the dry bulb industry if you indulge in this practice for questionable aesthetic reasons," he says. "Cutting down after a month is probably unwise but not completely destructive of all cultivars." Mr. Kingdom goes on to say, "after 10 years *in situ* the state of the six weeks row was truly remarkable. Here were some 350 bulbs still showing a mass of glorious color, substantially in excellent health and strength and not very different from their first year of flowering."

	Final Evaluation	1975—
Control Row, foliage uncut	46 points	59 points
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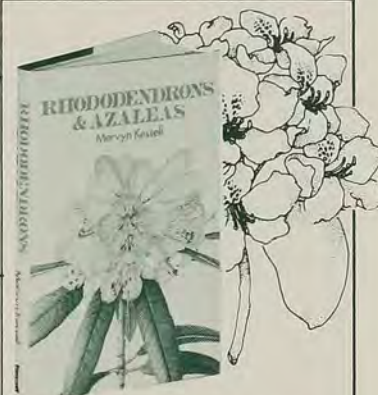
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## First Western Regional Conference a Big Success

The first AHS Western Regional Conference last October 3rd was an enjoyable mix of education, adventure and information (to say nothing of the delicious lunch). The conference took place in La Canada, California, at Descanso Gardens and was attended by 166 members. Welcoming the group to Descanso Gardens was Francis Ching, Director of Los Angeles County Arboreta and Botanic Gardens.

Noted guest speakers included Myron Kinnach, Curator of the

Huntington Botanical Gardens; and George Waters, editor of *Pacific Horticulture* magazine.

Kinnach spoke on discovering new garden plants in Mexico, and highlighted his adventuring with a stunning slide show. Veteran of 12 expeditions into Mexico's backcountry, Kinnach has collected 8,000 new species, spending over a year and a half, all told, in Mexico.

Following the speaker sessions, Descanso Gardens Superintendent, George Lewis, led a delightful walking tour of the gardens.

The conference was organized by AHS Board of Directors members Dr. Julia Rappaport and Mrs. Georgie Van deKamp. Besides her affiliation with AHS, Mrs. Van deKamp is also a member of the Descanso

Guild and her help in fundraising activities has made it possible for Descanso to begin building new, larger meeting facilities.

A second meeting took place on Saturday, March 27, at South Coast Botanic Garden in Palos Verdes, California. In April, members staffed a booth at the National Landscape Industry Show in Long Beach. The Third Western Regional Conference, to take place in October, is planned to coincide with the Society's 60th birthday. Sheila McQueen, a well-known British flower arranger, and other noted speakers will participate in this program. These activities are coordinated by the Western Regional Conference Development Committee, O. George Ghiotto, Chairman.

—Greg Lucas

## Erratum

In the March, 1982 issue of *American Horticulturist* news an error appeared in the article headed "Super Absorbents Save Time and Money." The water that ordinarily runs through the large pores in the soil and is lost is gravitational, not capillary, water. Capillary water is the water held in the small pores of the soil by its own surface tension. Both capillary and gravitational water are available to plants, but since capillary water is actually held in the soil, it is often the most important part of the total soil moisture available to plants.

## AHS Award at Philadelphia Flower Show

The Delaware Valley College of Science and Agriculture of Doylestown, Pennsylvania, received an award of excellence from the American Horticultural Society for their exhibit at the Philadelphia Flower Show.

This AHS award is made annually at the Philadelphia Show, and the

judges were particularly pleased with the educational value of the college's presentation of "Bulbs for All Seasons." The display, which was built by students at the college, gave useful information for all phases of growing bulbs that bloom in summer, fall, winter and spring.