

Beautification



America's Beautification Center— the National Arboretum

JOSEPH M. GARVEY, JR.



THE U.S. National Arboretum is an oasis of 415 acres of nature's beauty that is bounded by the Anacostia River, the Baltimore Parkway, and the business activities of the northeast section of our Nation's Capital. Established by Congress in 1927, its major purpose is to provide information on the landscape, beautification, industrial, and scientific uses of woody plants.

Visitors can enjoy an array of ordered beauty, skillfully arranged in a pleasing setting of woodland and meadow. This beauty, within reach of every citizen, is made up of native trees indigenous to the Northeastern United States, the exotic plants from plant explorations, demonstration plantings, and the nature walks through flowering azaleas, woodland herbs, and grassy meadows.

A stroll through the Gotelli dwarf conifers collection at the Arboretum strikes the visitor with deep impressions of solitude. Here the conifers of normal growth contrast pleasingly with their dwarf counterparts, in an arrangement of rocks and stone-mulched beds, set among velvet-green grass walkways.

The President has called on all of us to look at our surroundings and to determine what can be made beautiful, or more beautiful, or even what should be removed for the sake of beauty. Beauty now comes to have special meaning to us. How can such a plea be translated into reality? How can the many communities in our Nation find answers to the implications of such a task?

Destiny has brought an idea and an institution together.

Fulfillment of the ideal of beauty is now made possible by the existence of this great horticultural center, the National Arboretum, which is a mecca for those in search of beauty. It is a meeting place for the teachers, professionals, and laymen with horticultural interests.

The National Arboretum, with its staff of ornamental horticulturists and botanists, endeavors to present to the public—through its exhibition plantings, gardens, and demonstration plots—the essentials of beautification.

Literature on plant subjects illustrating new plants, planting techniques, and landscape schemes is provided through an active publication series. The lecture series and the formalized courses of the National Arboretum provide the student with technical knowledge and open new avenues of thought. Plant explorations are carried on with the New Crops Research Branch of USDA's Agricultural Research Service and with the Longwood Foundation. Such explorations across the world lead to discovery of exotic plants that might be suitable for landscape use in our own Nation.

With its research programs, the National Arboretum is making both inspirational and tangible contributions to the



Joseph M. Garvey, Jr., is *Curator* of Education at the U.S. National Arboretum, Crops Research Division, Agricultural Research Service.

A HUG FOR A TREE

Children who visit the National Arboretum add a special touch. One child threw his arms around a stately tulip tree, as if hugging it affectionately. Actually, he was trying to reach around its mighty trunk. Throughout the nature walk in Fern Valley, he and his companion hugged every tree that they could reach. I imagine if those old fellows could, they would have smiled approvingly and chuckled to themselves. For some 120,000 visitors pass through the Arboretum annually, but few ever stop and give the trees a hug.

national beautification program. In plant breeding, the Arboretum strives to develop new plants better adapted for landscape use—and plants of greater esthetic value. For example, improved fruiting of ornamentals, more disease-resistant plants, and flowering shrubs of greater beauty are being investigated.

Extensive efforts in the field of education are bringing these research findings and new techniques in plant usages and plant requirements to every homeowner and plantsman in the Nation.

New plant specimens are planted in tasteful arrangements in the rolling landscape of the Arboretum. Ready identification of these plants is made possible by conspicuous labels.

The Administration Building complements the beautiful natural setting of the Arboretum. This is a light and airy structure of glass, aluminum, and textured concrete. A visit to this building is a delightful experience. In its auditorium, which is surrounded by a reflecting pool, horticultural and botanical lectures are given and flower shows are held. Its herbarium stores a collection of more than 300,000 dried, pressed specimens. This herbarium enables taxonomists to identify plant specimens for homeowners and nurserymen as well as to determine plant relationships. Plant studies are conducted in the laboratories of the Administration Building.

In the nearby greenhouses, plants are

grown for use in Arboretum programs. Here, also, new plants are grown for distribution to other arboretums and botanic gardens cooperating in the plant distribution programs. Workshops in plant handling inform amateur plantsmen on new techniques. Demonstrations in plant propagation conducted in the greenhouse are among the most popular of the Arboretum's activities.

Both youth groups and adult organizations meet at the National Arboretum to learn how to handle and to arrange plants in the landscape. During part of their Washington, D.C., meeting, the 500 delegates of the National Youth Conference for Natural Beauty and Conservation assembled at the Arboretum. These delegates represented 12 national youth organizations whose combined membership exceeds 20 million. Their visit provided them with practical information about plant propagation and tree transplanting.

During a "windshield tour" of the Arboretum, they observed areas skillfully landscaped. Emphasis was placed upon the identification and use of community resources for beautification. Teaching the young people to protect natural resources is among the objectives of the Arboretum's attention to youth.

If the Nation is to spend more time and money on beautification, professional

70,000 AZALEAS

The most spectacular product of National Arboretum research covers the slopes of Mount Hamilton. In late April and early May, 70,000 hybrid azaleas produce their colorful blooms beneath a canopy of tulip, oak, and dogwood trees.

In other Arboretum areas, one may see magnolia hybrids that hold promise to escape late spring frosts, firethorns free of fire blight disease, and hybrid deciduous azaleas that may be able to tolerate the summers of our Southern States.

Hybrids from other breeding projects with hollies, hibiscus, viburnums, and crapemyrtle are, or will soon be, in the hands of commercial nurserymen.



*Reflecting pool, Administration Building,
at the U.S. National Arboretum.*

direction is needed. We envision years of service to the public and also to the professional and amateur plantsman.

A larger auditorium and exhibit facilities for special gardening interests are being considered. Local camellia, rose, and orchid society members and the Washington Botanic Society hold meetings and flower shows at the Arboretum. Surely this meeting facility should reach out to more and more national groups.

The National Capital Area Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc., of Metropolitan Washington holds its annual meeting in our auditorium. Its members meet for discussion of the coming year's program. National garden clubs interested in promoting the art and science of gardening can thus gain needed information. The U.S. Department of Agriculture is represented to help place Federal resources wherever they are needed.

The National Arboretum provides for guided tours for visiting groups. This service is ably carried on by volunteer

guides of the National Capital Area Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc.

Individuals are permitted to tour the grounds on their own with the assistance of our brochures.

The National Arboretum reports on its activities to the public by broadcasts on USDA radio and television programs and through Department news releases. By means of these media, the public can become acquainted with the Arboretum activities and take advantage of educational opportunities. Tree selection and care is only one of the many topics.

Because so many plants are available for use in the home landscape, professional guidance is very desirable. The National Arboretum provides services to homeowners through plant identification and publication of recommended lists of plants for landscaping. The question of how to plant and to care for plants is essential to both rural and urban beautification efforts. Through its field trials and experimentation, the National Arboretum adapts the best methods—after making comparisons, and all of these reports are available in the USDA series of popular publications.

In research, the Arboretum will soon initiate a program in shade tree breeding and selection. Specific clones selected for their outstanding qualities will be emphasized. Selection and use of trees in the landscape are critical factors.

The Arboretum is surveying the national interest in horticulture. Student gardener courses that can be tailored to the apprentice-type gardener may be conducted. Courses for the ornamental horticulture extension specialists to update and exchange ideas would be beneficial. Our staff and area specialists would also benefit from personal contacts with such national specialists.

The program of national beautification as it involves the Arboretum suggests many other possibilities. Rehabilitation of the mentally disturbed, for instance, and courses and tours for the blind and handicapped. The utilization of specialized plants such as native plants in the home landscape would benefit the beautification program.