Landscape Horticulture Makes Arizona Beautiful

Leland Burkhart

Landscape horticulture includes the appropriate use of trees, shrubs, flowers, and turfs. Lawns are basic for home landscaping; palms for bold tropical effects; citrus trees as evergreens with fruit for the patio; shade trees, both evergreen and deciduous, for fruit and shade; shrubs for flowering, fruit, color, and tropical effects; roses for all home gardens; vines and ground covers for texture and color; flowering bedding plants, bulbs and herbaceous perennials for all seasons; and cacti and succulents for desert effects.

One of the earliest projects in landscape materials developed by University of Arizona horticulturists concerned eucalyptus introductions from Australia. This stimulated much interest in the southwestern states, resulting in many eucalyptus plantings in parks, private grounds and rural areas. Eucalyptus species were the dominating trees at the Boyce Thompson Southwestern Arboretum near Superior. Recently, there has been developed a mist system for propagating of eucalyptus cuttings at the University of Arizona. This method of vegetative propagation offers much promise in the development of clonal lines of superior strains of eucalyptus.

Pioneered With Many Species

In Arizona, additional pioneer work was conducted in connection with other introduced shade trees including mulberry, Rhus lancea, carob, loquat, Aleppo pine; and dual purpose trees including palm, pecan, olive, citrus, apricot and flowering peaches and plums. The Rhus lancea was introduced from South Africa and has proven well adapted as an evergreen shade tree for southern Arizona. Seed of this species was made available to nurseries by the University of Arizona.

Pecans have proven very popular for shade and nuts in urban and rural areas. Research horticulturists have developed methods of correcting zinc deficiency and have provided information on superior varieties for the appropriate irrigated areas of the state.

The search for native shade tree plant materials during the early pioneering period of the Arizona territory was important for cooling homesteads and making homes more livable before the advent of coolers. Many of the introduced trees were subject to alkali injury and other limiting factors for growth.

Outstanding native trees found suitable for shade purposes in landscaping Arizona homes and parks include the Arizona ash, male cottonwood, blue Palo Verde, Arizona sycamore, ponderosa pine and the native black walnut. A recent plant introduction for landscape purposes is prostrate white lantana from Mexico.

Making Bermuda Thrive

In the development of Arizona landscaping, Bermuda grass proved well adapted for lawns and other turf uses in southern Arizona. Horticulturists have shown the importance of appropriate nitrogen fertilization, watering, and mowing. The experimental use of maleic hydrazide on Bermuda grass has proven effective in management applications in golf courses of Arizona and other southern states. In co-operation with the Tucson City Parks Department, university horticulturists have found that Tifgreen Bermuda is the best adapted of the fine hybrid strains for southern Arizona. This new strain is being used extensively for golf course turf in the state.

Activities of the University of Arizona horticulturists include origin and programming of the annual Arizona Turf Conferences. The annual Arizona Nurserymen's Short Courses were also originated by university horticulturists. Successful development of mist propagation at the University of Arizona has attracted many nurserymen sufficiently to make their own installations.

The variety testing program of various trees and shrubs at the branch experiment stations has aided nurserymen in making available to the public appropriate landscape plant materials. In co-operation with the Tucson City Parks Department, the university has recently developed an extensive rose testing garden.

It's Big Business

We have an annual $100 million urban horticultural industry in Arizona, and this is rapidly expanding due to increased urbanization. The landscape attractiveness of the state is recognized as an important feature in connection with the tourist industry. Increased action is being taken to improve the landscaping of homes, parks and parkways, school grounds, college and university campuses, athletic fields, golf courses, business and industrial sites, highway landscaping, and government grounds.

More than 300 persons from all parts of the state participated in the recent Landscape Design Conference requested by the Arizona Federation of Garden Clubs and presented by the University of Arizona, in co-operation with the Arizona Association of Nurserymen and the landscape architects, parks executives and suppliers. UA horticulturists have also provided leadership in the annual Southwest Shade Tree Conferences. The 1960 meeting was held on the university campus.

Dr. Burkhart is head of the Department of Horticulture.

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