

Behind the scenes in Milwaukee

Exciting things are happening concerning our environment and growing things. In September, I attended the annual Garden Writers Association of America meeting in the vital city of Milwaukee, Wis. The Indians called it Milliokei, a gathering place by the waters — and it is truly a beautiful city.

At these meetings we combine business with pleasure and are privileged to visit areas of public facilities that the casual visitor can't see. For instance, we saw the "behind the scenes" workings of the Mitchell Park Domes, fondly called the Tri-Domes. The Domes, set amongst acres of formal plantings, form a conservatory.

They are joined by a bustling lobby. Each glass dome is almost half the length of a football field and nearly as tall as a seven story building. They are at 524 S. Layton Blvd.

The Tropical Dome contains plants from tropical rain forests; The Arid Dome contains plants native to arid regions of the world; and the third, the Show Dome, features specific floral exhibits five times a year. When we visited, a breathtaking Chinese garden was a delight.

UPCOMING special exhibits are: through Nov. 12, A Venetian cafe with thousands of chrysanthemums on display; and Nov. 23 through Jan. 7, a wonderful display called "Twas

the Night Before Christmas". . . a fantasy well worth the visit. Included will be many, many poinsettias.

The most interesting part was to go below these huge structures and see the boilers and other machinery that keep the proper climatic conditions for each dome.

Another day we visited the Boerner Botanical Gardens (92nd and Hales Corners), toured the All-America selections area, the formal gardens and the rose garden. A 1,000-acre arboretum includes many trees and shrubs for enjoying. These areas are also used for research and education.

It was a special treat to stop at an inner-city garden to see what can be


done with foresight and hard work. The area had been cleared for urban renewal, plans were changed, so the garden was begun. This is a Milwaukee County University Extension Project. Since Milwaukee is a city of many cultures, the garden instructions are printed in Hmong, Laotian, Spanish and English. We could sense the pride of the gentleman with whom we spoke.

The Farmers Market in Madison was a unique experience with many vendors all around the capital building. Yes, I did bring home some Wisconsin cheese.

We visited two wildlife fields and wetlands, one in Madison and the other at the Wehr Nature center,

down to earth

Marty Figley



located close to Boerner Botanical Gardens and Whitnall Park. We learned that once a year the wildflower meadows are burned to control unwanted species and to encourage native plants to thrive.

TWO THINGS from the trip stand out in my mind and are so important to our future. The first was a visit to the Biotron at the University of Wisconsin, Madison was certainly an eye-opener. Here we saw potatoes and mushrooms that had been grown in a controlled atmosphere for space agriculture.

The building has 100 environmentally controlled enclosures including 48 rooms of up to 270 square feet in size. We, of course were interested in the plants, but the Biotron is also a research facility for pharmacy, oncology and zoology for private industry as well as university studies. It is a fascinating place that you can visit if prior arrangements are made.

The second, a program called "Don't Bag It," practiced in a Dallas neighborhood and conducted by Texas A&M University with the cooperation of Toro Products, piqued my interest.

Selected families allowed their grass to reach a height of three inches. Then, they mowed it regularly to a height of two inches. The clippings were not bagged, but remained on the lawn to be compacted back into the soil. This idea sounds like a winner to me.

IF YOUR organization is interested in receiving more information, please write to: Randall L. Upshaw, District Executive Director, Texas A&M University Research & Extension Center, 17360 Coit Road Dallas, Texas 75252-6599. Include a \$5 check made out to TAEX Acct. #20182.

The program was a great success and I'm sure more people will become involved next year because the saw the green and healthy lawns of the participants. This is one small way we can eliminate using plastic bags and help our world in the pollution fight without much effort.

A final note: the GWAA Award of the Year was given to Lady Bird Johnson and Carlton Lees, along with the National Wildflower Research Center for their book "Wildflowers Across America."

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Gallery Crawl planned

Art Ventures, an art appreciation group sponsored by Paint Creek Center for the Arts of Rochester, plans a Gallery Crawl in Birmingham on Wednesday, Nov. 8.


The group will see the new exhibitions at galleries on Townsend and North Woodward and have lunch at Panache in downtown Birmingham.

For information on and reservations for the Gallery Crawl, call Paint Creek Center by Friday, 651-4110.


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