Surburban Gardener

A Look At A Session Of U.S. Horticulturalists

By BETTY FRANKEL
Special Writer

The American Horticultural Society held its 24th annual Congress in Philadelphia last week with more than 400 garden enthusiasts (including The Observer Newspapers' Suburban Gardener) attending from all parts of the country.

There were representatives from all the mayor arboretums and botanical gardens, from garden clubs, horticultural societies, special plant societies, from magazines and periodicals devoted to horticulture, and many plain home gardeners.

Almost all of the states were represented, including Hawaii and there were gardeners from several foreign countries, including the Soviet Union.

SEVERAL DAYS were devoted to lectures, films and reports from scientists and experts. Other days were set aside for tours of urban Philadelphia, suburban gardens, and estates and arboretums in the area.

A panel of experts discussed the damage to plants from polluted city air and explained the research being done to select and breed resistant plants. Both exhaust fumes and factory smoke cause a band of dead tissue on the edges of leaves and, if severe enough, the plants are killed. A plea was made for control measures that would prevent air pollution.

New methods of propagating plants from cuttings were explained, including ways for the home gardener to root cuttings of trees and shrubs in a plastic bag on a window sill.

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WAYS OF GROWING plants under lights were shown, and slides shown of experiments illustrating the benefits of increased warmth and carbon dioxide to plants grown in a greenhouse.

A tour of a chemical company that produces fertilizers, weed-killers, and insecticides included a visit to the laboratories and gardens where these products are tested to determine their effectiveness.

At the Burpee Seed Co. Fordhook Farms, the "All-America" flower and vegetable test gardens were inspected. There was a preview display of new plants to be introduced for the first time in 1970. Especially attractive were a cherry red Zinnia named "Lipstick," a large shaggy orange marigold called "Smiles," and a creamy white marigold named "Whitemost." There was also a yellow beet.

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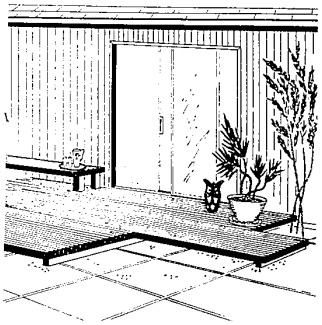
OF SPECIAL interest were the inner city gardening projects. Gaily blooming window boxes brightened blighted areas, sparking a general improvement on each block. Tiny parks created on vacant lots had benches and barbecues as well as beds of flowers, trees and shrubs. They were like oases in a desert of brick and cement.

Tours were taken through Philadelphia's Fairmont Park, one of the largest city parks in the world. In addition to play areas and wild areas, situated in the park are a beautifully landscaped Japanese tea house and about a dozen old historic mansions.

Other tours took visitors to Longwood gardens, Winterthur, several arboretums, and to beautifully landscaped estates along the Philadephia "Main Line" and in the Chestnut Hill section.



MINI-DECK eliminates dangerous step down from doorsill to patio by leveling walking surface between outdoors and interior floor. Deck is built entirely of Douglas fir 2x4s. with joists laid directly on patio paving. Bench by door makes stop-off for trays of refreshments.

The Green Thumb

By GEORGE ABRAHAM

Why Sunflowers Change: Many home gardeners have asked me why it is that their sunflower plants, instead of producing one large head, produces 30 to 40 smaller heads. Many sunflowers are known as "Multifloras," producing several heads instead of one large head, the regular sunflower used for bird food.

They all belong to the same family, but the multifloras are used almost entirely as ornamentals, and birds still love their seeds. Sungold is an example of a multiflora whereas the Mammoth Russian sunflower is a single-headed variety used for bird seed. The mixup comes about when you order seed from your seedhouse and do not specify whether you prefer the sunflower with large, heavy head or the kind with many small heads.

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AN AID FOR AILING PLANTS: A reader writes: "If your house plants aren't doing too well, or the soil is too moist for good growth, try this trick: cut up into confetti strips a handful of brown paper, the kind you get at the supermarket.

Mix it into the flower potting soil, a handful for each pot. This material (actually wood pulp) will bring on an immediate improvement, and new growth of plants will take place in a month or two when the pulp becomes broken down."

Green Thumb note: This should work because of letting air to roots (soil conditioner), because the paper acts like peat moss and holds water, and because of the possible nutrient effects. If your leaves show a pale yellow coloring, you can add extra nutrients in the form of a liquid plant food, such as 23-19-19.

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CREOSOTE FOR PEACH tree borers? Recently we mentioned that a fruit grower controlled peach tree borers by painting the trunks of trees with creosote. A reader wrote: "The conservation office warns us that this would kill the trees even before the borers would."

Mr. Harvey F. Stoke, who supplied us this information is a prominent member of the North American Fruit Explorers. He has used creosote to cure black knot on plums, canker in roses and borers on peaches. Mr. Stoke is a reliable man. Recently he won the Johnny Appleseed award of the Men's Garden Club of America.

Mr. Stokes sprays the entire plum trees with pure creosote when it is in a dormant condition. We have painted peach and nectarine trees with creosote from the ground to a foot above ground and have noticed no harm to the trees.

Robert Kurle, editor of The North American Pomona Magazine has been using creosote on peach trees for eight years.

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