

"RICE, BAMBOO, KYOTO"

PEGGY SULLIVAN

IT IS FREQUENTLY said about the Philippines, particularly by those who visit by ship with one day per country, that Manila is filthy, war scarred and a city to miss. This is true. Yet during this past spring the writer and her Mother spent several extremely interesting days on Luzon. The secret lies in leaving Manila behind and travelling by car to the interior. Although even while on the outskirts of the city, a horticultural eye views many thrilling scenes. Wild Bird Nest Ferns, five feet high with fronds rolled together into cylinders, are hawked like newspapers on Dewey Boulevard. Gigantic clumps of Dendrobiums, captured from the mountains while in their peak of bloom, hang from a bamboo pole over the shoulder of a man as he leans against a gigantic *Ficus religiosa*. With these inhabitants of the Philippine jungle, have come into civilization seeds of the unbelievable Jade Vine, now pendulant with heavy chains of green pea flowers in many Manila gardens. Along Manila Bay instead of staring at war "momentos" rusting in the shallow water, it is far more enlightening to peer into small carts holding a pot collection of Bougainvillea, Achillea, pine trees, jasmine and roses. An odd assortment but always reinforced by a tangled mass of Phalaenopsis and Paphiopedilum tossed into the corners.

Plant-wise, the only residential district of interest is Forbes Park. Here the homes are magnificent. But the gardens fall short, due to unimaginative designing, low water pressure and a sub-soil hardly worth the effort of penetrating. Individual plant clumps such as the Traveller's Palm and species of the Fishtail Palms were impressive but without design they resemble a Botanical Garden!

Beyond Manila one finds the villages and authentic Philippine countryside. The countless rice paddies, banana plantations, coconut groves are interesting, especially in the evening when bordered by wallowing carabao. But fabulous are the "gar-

dens"—actually wild orchids, ferns and begonias—all in clay pots fastened to the bamboo butts on stilts high above the ground and chickens.

What should be mecca for all plantsmen is the gorge at Pagsanjan. Very narrow, dark and deep, it is beloved by the Manilans for its gentle rapids taken in a hollowed-out log. But to one who has ridden the Colorado River these rapids were only quaint! Actually, the overwhelming awe felt in the gorge is derived from the display of native plants clinging by their root tips to the vertical cliffs. Here are the wild Bird Nest Ferns and Polypodiums, Anthuriums, palms, orchids, begonias, tree ferns, Ficus, all in their splendor, with monkeys for companions.

We left Manila with regret, not knowing that the next three days would be spent flying each day back and forth from Manila to Hong Kong, never being quite able to pierce the Hong Kong weather.

Everyone knows Hong Kong is fascinating. It is, but mainly for junks, rickshas and new suits made over night. The Tiger Balm Garden is atrocious. A great deal of the native vegetation on the hillsides has been replaced by shacks of the refugees from the Communist regime. The Colony is pathetically overcrowded. But the orchid trees (*Bauhinias*) were in bloom, an occasional Coral tree (*Erythrina*), and red Ceiba were viewed against the rich green Banyans, with sparse clumps of bamboo, tree ferns and lantana scattered about the hillsides. Rather a dismal horticultural picture, yet a moment of utter delight occurred while in the New Territories. During a stop made near the Red Border, so as to stare at the Communist soldiers, we noted one elderly Chinese woman wearing the customary wide brim hat, the brim edged with four inches of heavy fringe. Within the fringe was discovered a cluster of flowers of the intensely fragrant native *Michelia fuscata*.

While on Macao we were amazed to see bands of small Chinese children rov-

ing about the Buddhist Temple collecting the fallen flowers of the gigantic red *Ceiba* overhead. First dried and later boiled, the flowers are used as a cure for the summer dysentery.

On a flight from Hong Kong to Tokyo one passes directly over Taiwan (Formosa). Numerous plant names contain "formosanum", so it was with a sense of duty that we dropped down for several days, completely unprepared for the bewildering display of tropical plants. It is truly a tropical China. Under heavy porcelain roofs, the temple altars are jeweled with pots of *Clivia* and *Oncidium*, *Cymbidium* and *Dendrobium* orchids. Gigantic canes of timber bamboo swayed heavily in the moist air as roosting white pigeons fought to keep balance. Through the mountainous dirt roads, the car brushed against the tree ferns, *Alpinia*, *Philodendron*, *Begonia*, *Datura* and *Asparagus plumosus*. Enter into the tangled profusion, and one became hopelessly clutched by blooming Passion Vine. Higher up the mountain *Rhododendron* and *Azalea* appeared as foreigners to the lush tropical jungle below. Rank green *Pandanus* lined many streams, just as blue *Hydrangeas* replaced the rice plants at the paddy edge. All enclosed in veritable cages of giant bamboo.

Oddly, no private gardens are developed in the countryside, all courtyards being enclosed, with ducks inside and carabao outside.

The Botanical Garden at Taipei is casually maintained, rich in palm specimens, and deaf to the English language. The writer toured it in a chilling heavy rain accompanied by a thoroughly soaked and bored interpreter—all handicaps to enthusiasm. But few cities in the world can provide on their trains, as they do, glasses of hot tea followed by scented hot towels, all this while rolling along through masses of red *Clerodendron* under crimson *Ceiba*. We left Taiwan while still in shock from receiving so much and expecting so little.

In Tokyo we were suddenly in the numbing cold of the Temperate Zone in early April. But in the five weeks to follow we were continually warmed by the sincer-

ity of the Japanese people. With us they needed much patience, for in travelling throughout Japan watching spring unfold, we lived in the Inns. Our enduring guide during the stay explained not only the ritual of the bath, the bed, the food and the shoes, but also the necessity of being polite. This writer repaid, by mentioning in large and loud adjectives, the countless beauties of Japan. Something he had taken for granted. Before, when riding the Hozu River rapids, he had never really noticed the wild masses of lavender *Wisteria* on the cliffs with groundcover of violets, underneath a canopy of pink flowering cherry.

During a rain, the mountains are more beautiful than in the glare of a bright sun. Through the mist, the wild *Azalea* petals become a tender lilac pink, intensified by the deep black-green of the *Pinus thunbergi* overhead. Entire mountainsides often are clothed only in these two plants. Other slopes, as in Beppu, are tapestries of large Japanese Maples and wild Cherries. Possibly the most striking combination is seen in the forest near Nikko, where the yellow-green bamboo canes pierce through the thick black *Cryptomerias*.

Evidently it is not illegal in Japan to break off branches from native flowering trees. Frequently, youngsters were observed on their way home from school with branches of wild camellias taken from trees twenty feet high. The mountain climbers, after a strenuous weekend on the peaks, would return to their homeward train with ice axe in one hand and *Magnolia kobus* in the other. Firewood trucks coming down from Lake Chuzenji would have tucked on top, limbs of *Rhododendron pentaphyllum* var. *Nikkoense*, the color an unbelievable pink.

Just as each rice plant in Japan is tended by hand, so also is the fruit tree. Well built terraces contain tangerines, mulched heavily with wheat straw and protected by windbreaks of clipped *Podocarpus macrophyllus*. Somewhat of an improvement over *Eucalyptus globulus*! Even the loquat flower clusters are carefully bagged, giving the tree a striking appearance.

Those of us in southern California

familiar with the Japanese nursery trade would see great similarity between nursery methods and stock there on the Islands and here at home. Only the gallon can is missing! It is replaced by burlap and raffia or newspapers. A startling difference in balling methods is noted. Trees to be transplanted are dug with extremely small balls of earth and moved about the garden by manpower, with the assistance of young lady gardeners.

But it is in the design of the garden that the Japanese show their capacity for detail and philosophical leanings. Their technique has been described long ago and is not to be repeated here. But it may be said that their understanding is great or the writer would not have sat for thirty minutes on the floor of a Kyoto Temple and absorbed the raked sand and fifteen stones arranged as islands on the ocean.

Before visiting Japan one might think

that all this is done with the eyes closed, the design ideas coming from within. But, no, the eyes are open and studying the natural landscaping of Japan itself. The Inland Sea and the pine clad little islands of Matsushima are all represented in gardens with quiet dignity and sensitive proportion. While hiking along the trail above Myanoshita a small canyon was observed consisting of boulders, thick moss, and deciduous trees, almost an exact replica of the man-made moss garden at the Saiho-ji Temple at Kyoto. Both gardens, the God-made and the man-made, possessed an almost unearthly restfulness. An emotion not easily copied from the wild.

Actually all of Japan is blessed with great natural beauty. To this is added sake and chopped octopus, poached bird's egg in soup, and seaweed tea. It was difficult to say "Sayonara"!

DESCANSO GARDENS AND ITS ROLE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ARBORETA AND BOTANIC GARDENS

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ON JULY 1, DESCANSO GARDENS was transferred from the Department of Parks and Recreation to the Department of Arboreta and Botanic Gardens. This shift in administration marks a shift in policy from that of garden display to a policy which emphasizes education and testing in the horticultural and botanical fields.

It is planned that test plots will be installed to determine adaptability of certain plants to local conditions and to demonstrate their proper landscape use and growth requirements. Outstanding in this category will be plant families represented by horticultural societies and test organizations such as the various All-America selection groups. It is planned also to feature a demonstration garden of California native plants to further interest in the choice plants of California and to educate young people in nature appreciation and understanding.

The Gardens will play an important role

in the Los Angeles community as a horticultural center where plant societies, garden clubs and professional horticulturalists may assemble, demonstrate to the public their special interests, and receive specialized and professional instruction in the various horticultural and botanical fields.

Descanso Gardens is particularly well-adapted for such use because of existing facilities which can be converted to educational purposes with little or no expenditure. The first facility to be used is the Lakeside Cottage for the Children's Education program. Here special courses for elementary grades will be conducted in various phases of nature study.

It is expected that the former mansion, which has numerous rooms very well-adapted for assembly purposes, will become a center for botanical and horticultural study. The Gardens proper, however, will probably always be the main source



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