

GEORGE GROENEWEGEN

MARCH 3, 1876—FEBRUARY 6, 1955

A PLANTSMAN by heritage and desire, George Groenewegen, described as "a gentleman who looks as if he had stepped out of a Rembrandt canvas," left a living monument in the Botanical Garden at the University of California, Los Angeles. He joined the staff of the University in 1926 to raise trees and shrubs for the new campus in Westwood. It is reported that eighty thousand pots and cans were his responsibility in those early years and that most of the large trees on the present campus were grown and tended by him. But Mr. Groenewegen was not satisfied with raising plants for the general landscaping and shortly he began planting a botanical garden in the arroyo which crossed the campus. Through the years this garden developed under his care to become a teaching and test garden unique in southern California. The students who walk its paths and study its plants are being trained in a tradition which began with the first botanical gardens and which has been maintained by such men as George Groenewegen.

For George Groenewegen's love and knowledge of plants was inherited from his grandfather, the Hortulanus of Hortus Amsterdam. His father and brothers, reared in a world where plants were their "alphabet and daily bread," operated a nursery in Utrecht. Young George was sent to private schools, where at one time he was classmate of the late Peter Riedel,* but his knowledge of botany and horticulture was learned at home and practiced as an apprentice gardener in Erfurt, Germany and in Brussels. In 1899 he made his first trip to this country accompanying one of many shipments of palms. The following year he went to the Transvaal to obtain new palms and seeds. In 1907, after bringing another shipment of palms



to this country, he worked for Bobbink and Atkins in Rutherford, New Jersey, a year later moving to Arkansas as manager of a large fruit orchard. In 1911 he became canal rider and overseer of a huge rice acreage owned by Dutch interests near Port Arthur, Texas. He arrived in southern California in 1914 where he worked for Coolidge Nursery in Pasadena at \$50 a month for two years. In 1916 he moved to the Raymond Hotel in Pasadena where he had charge of the plantings until he joined the staff of the University. Retirement from the University in 1947 was a mere formality for he immediately joined the staff of the Los Angeles Country Club in July, 1947, as Assistant Propagator in charge of the conservatory. He enjoyed this position, for to him all work with plants was enjoyment, until poor health forced his retirement in July, 1953.

He is survived by Mrs. Groenewegen (Beerrendiena Plugge) whom he married in 1902, four children, and many grandchildren.

DONALD P. WOOLLEY
MILDRED E. MATHIAS

**Lasca Leaves*, Vol. V. 1.21.



1955. "George Groenewegen." *Lasca leaves* 5(Summer 1955), 61.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/129410>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/124978>

Holding Institution

Missouri Botanical Garden, Peter H. Raven Library

Sponsored by

Los Angeles Arboretum

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: In copyright. Digitized with the permission of the rights holder.

Rights Holder: The Arboretum Library at the Los Angeles County Arboretum and Botanic Garden

License: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>

Rights: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/permissions>

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.