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THE GARDEN CLUB OF AMERICA TOURS THE ARNOLD ARBORETUM MAY 15, 1946

THE Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University is fast approaching its best today. Azaleas, crab apples, lilacs and hundreds of other plants are vying with each other to attract attention. The spring, a most peculiar one, at first, abnormally advanced blooming dates, but later, because of several weeks of cold weather, the blooming of many species was retarded so that today the season is just about "on time."

The Arnold Arboretum, established in 1872, has long been outstanding in the introduction of new plants from all parts of the world. Many of its introductions are now common in nurseries throughout the land. At present there are approximately 6,000 different species and varieties of woody plants growing within its borders. The famous garden of woody plants is not the only important feature of the Arboretum. It also maintains a library of more than 46,000 volumes dealing chiefly with woody plants, and an herbarium of 640,000 mounted specimens, limited to woody plants. The garden, the library and the herbarium, each one of which has earned world renown in its own field, all constitute the Arnold Arboretum; and these are supplemented by the greenhouse laboratories.

Time does not permit a thorough examination of each one of these parts of the Arboretum. The garden of plants, made so famous by the painstaking effort of its first director, Charles Sprague Sargent, and also because of the many new plants it introduced through the efforts of Ernest H. Wilson, is now at its prime, and the Garden Club of America tour will be entirely taken up with the observation of these many wonderful trees and shrubs.

The first color to be noted as one enters through the Jamaica Plain gate and passes the Administration Building, is a planting of the pinkshell azalea (*Rhododendron Vaseyi*) beside the road a little beyond the linden collection. A native of the southeastern United States, this azalea does very well in the Arboretum, and is especially valued because its leaves turn red in the fall. A walk through the woods at this point is most invigorating for here are planted hundreds of the torch azalea (*Rhododendron obtusum Kaempferi*) one of the many outstanding orna-

mental plants the Arnold Arboretum has introduced to this country. Walking through the famous collection of 137 different kinds of maples, the sentry maple (*Acer saccharum monumentale*) and the columnar form of the red maple are prominent. To the average visitor the maples are merely a group of common trees, but on close examination one is surprised at the large number which have been collected from other parts of the world and which can be grown in this climate. The maple collection merely exemplifies what is true of many other groups of plants, namely that many species and varieties are growing in the Arnold Arboretum, not all with outstanding ornamental value but with some of considerable merit that have never been grown and offered for sale by commercial nurseries.

Leaving the maples, one comes into the shrub collection, containing nearly one thousand different kinds of shrubs, growing in long lines where they can be readily cared for and where each group of plants is kept growing fairly close together. This affords an excellent opportunity for comparing the different species and varieties in a genus. A majority of the honeysuckles, quinces, spireas, currants and rose species will be found growing here. Special attention might be given the yellow roses shortly to be in bloom. *Rosa primula* is first to bloom, closely followed by *R. Hugonis*. Many of the quinces are still in flower and it is interesting to note the wide diversity of flower sizes and colors among these old-fashioned favorites. Some of the currants (*Ribes sp.*) spireas and pearlbushes (*Exochorda sp.*) are also in full bloom.

Driving past the bank of sprawling forsythias (containing eighteen different kinds) it is hard to realize that included in the collection of lilacs beyond are over 450 different varieties and species. These will be seen at first hand later. The beautybush on the left of the road beyond the lilacs is one of the many plants the Arnold Arboretum has introduced into cultivation. It is just now coming into flower. Before 1922 it was indeed rare in nurseries although it had been growing continuously in the Arboretum since 1907. Now it is available from almost every nursery in the country.

On the right of the road where it winds up Bussey Hill, is the viburnum collection some of which are now in flower. These serviceable plants cannot be recommended too often for they are of value when in flower as well as when their bright colored fruits and brilliant autumn foliage is on display in the fall.

Ascending Bussey Hill, past the *Euonymus* collection on the left, there are some *Prunus* species and varieties, some beach plums (*Prunus maritima*); and on the right the magnificent oak collection. At the top of Bussey Hill one can look across to Hemlock Hill, now showing material damage from the results of two hurricanes. In 1938, winds of over 125 miles per hour velocity felled more than 300 mighty hemlocks, many of which were growing sturdily when George Washington was President of the United States. Many young hemlocks have since been planted, but the blowing over of so many trees on this rocky hill has seriously effected the water-holding capacity of the soil and hence the growth of the remaining mature trees is materially retarded.

Coming down from the top of Bussey Hill, one can walk across an open area and under the large old pines at the end of the path. Many plants have been growing on Bussey Hill, mostly the Asiatic introductions of E. H. Wilson. Some were so over-

grown that this year it has been imperative to replant or replace many of them, an operation which is going on at the present moment. Before leaving this area, one should pause a moment under the cedars of Lebanon, forty-year-old trees originally coming to the Arboretum as seeds in 1902 from their northernmost limits in the Anti-Taurus Mountains of Turkey, just north of Syria. Many times this species had been tried, only to succumb in New England's climate, but this strain has proved hardy for more than four decades, withstanding temperatures of twenty degrees below zero. Close examination will show some of the peculiar cones still remaining on the trees. It takes two years for them to mature.

The native pinxterflower (*Rhododendron nudiflorum*) as well as its close relative *R. roseum* with darker pink flowers, is on the left of the path as one walks back to the road. The brilliant scarlet azalea seen throughout the woods and so gorgeous at the end of this walk under the century old pines is the torch azalea from Japan (*R. obtusum Kaempferi*) often referred to by Professor Sargent as the most brilliantly colored of all the Arnold Arboretum introductions. The mauve colored azalea is the Korean azalea (*R. yedonense poukhanense*) another Arboretum introduction. Note how well it goes with the pale lemon yellow flowers of the Warminster broom close by.

Stopping for a few moments at Azalea Path on the way down Bussey Hill, hundreds of azaleas can be seen in full bloom. The first along the path is the royal azalea from Japan (*Rhododendron Schlippenbachii*) which is one of those rare azaleas the foliage of which is blessed with autumn color in the fall. Across from this is the hardy form of the silk tree (*Albissia julibrissin rosea*) which the Arboretum introduced from Korea in 1918, and this specimen was grown from the original importation of seeds. The trees that are so common in the southern United States are not so hardy in New England, but this form is. The foliage is very delicate and the interesting, thread-like flowers, begin to appear the middle of July and continue until September. A really unusual tree for this part of the country.

Walking back to the Bussey Hill road and down the hill, one passes the oaks, the mountain ashes, the rockery with several interesting small plants, the hornbeams, and beyond them but mostly unseen from the road, the junipers and yews. Dogwoods (*Cornus florida*) and redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) are evident everywhere and are loaded with flowers this year. Only one or two of the rhododendrons are in flower now, yet the Arboretum has 285 representatives of the genus *Rhododendron* growing within its borders. The famous bank of mountain laurel will not bloom for at least another two or three weeks.

The hill to the right of the road harbors most of the pinetum where hundreds of evergreens from many parts of the world display their dependable green foliage year in and year out. Pines alone are represented by 68 different species and varieties. The graceful Sargent weeping hemlock to the left of the road has been growing there since 1881. Plants were originally found growing on an estate along the Hudson River of upper New York. This is a splendid specimen and is another living example of what peculiar forms Mother Nature sometimes creates.

Continuing through the gates and across Bussey Street to the Peters Hill area, one comes to the oldest collection of ornamental crab apples in the country. Here 189 species and varieties of the genus *Malus* are being grown side by side. The

trees range in height from the low Sargent crab apple (7' to 8') to the tall Mandshurian crab which is a standard tree of over 50 feet in height. The peak of the flowering of these interesting and usefully ornamental trees is in the first two weeks of May, but some are still in flower. To appreciate them fully, one should return to see their myriads of small brilliant fruits during the late summer and fall.

Time being at a premium, one rushes on past the pinetum once more, being certain to gain a view down Bussey Brook of the splendid native stand of American beeches, and on to the gorgeous planting of a thousand of the torch azaleas on South Street bank, through the propagating units of the Arboretum, glancing at a few of the experimental beds where many interesting experiments are being carried out by Arboretum staff members. There may be only a minute to pause at the unique collection of dwarf evergreen trees, originally imported from Japan many years ago by Larz Anderson and presented to the Arboretum by Mrs. Anderson. Some of these are well over 150 years old. The hedge collection of over 100 different kinds of clipped hedges is always open to close inspection for those who want to choose just the right hedge material for the right place.

Before finally leaving the Arboretum, one should enter the Forest Hills gate where the majority of visitors first come, walk among the oriental cherry trees (now past bloom for several weeks) and pause a moment to admire the magnificent specimen of the Sargent cherry which is one of the oldest in this country grown from the first packet of seeds here introduced by the Arnold Arboretum in 1890. It is a standard tree, perfectly hardy under New England conditions. Graced with deep pink flowers in the early spring at about the same time the bronze leaves start to unfurl, it is of marked ornamental interest a second time in the fall when its foliage turns a brilliant scarlet.

Leaving this specimen and continuing to the top of the famous lilac collection, one cannot help but gain inspiration from walking among these beautiful plants. Plant breeders and home owners for nearly two centuries have been contributing new varieties, and here in the collection, a studied attempt has been made during the past years to grow at least one specimen of every variety which can be obtained. At present there are 450 species and varieties. They commence to bloom about the first week in May with some varieties coming into bloom for a six-week period thereafter. At this time, by far the most numerous are the varieties of the common lilac (*S. vulgaris*) of which there are over 300 varieties being grown here. An interesting experiment would be for several individuals to stroll through this collection and each list the ten "best" lilacs. Comparisons of such lists after a thirty-minute or a five-hour visit are sometimes most educational.

The early lilac, the late lilac, the littleleaf lilac that blooms a second time in the fall, the tree lilac and the Preston lilac—all are here and growing well. If lilacs are one's chief interest, this collection is the place to study them. Even the amateur is enthusiastic, for this large collection is living proof of the great efforts which have gone into the breeding and selection of these plants by hundreds of people throughout the north temperate zone.

There is no better way to finish one's May visit to the Arboretum than to linger among the lilacs, and absorb to the full their fragrance and beauty.

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