

A STUDENT'S VIEW OF ENGLISH HORTICULTURE

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I am presently a senior at Cal Poly, Pomona, majoring in ornamental horticulture. In July, 1973, I was fortunate enough to receive a one-year technical scholarship offered by the British horticulture magazine, "The Grower". The scholarship paid for my lodging and some spending money during my year at Pershore College of Horticulture, Pershore, Worcestershire, England. In return, I completed a program of experiments in nursery propagation and attended classes and field trips with English students also studying nursery work. The year gave me a broad look at the English nursery industry as well as English students in general.

I decided to narrow the subject of my talk to what impressed me most as a student during my stay — and that is the method of teaching horticulture used at Pershore College.

In England, more so than America, there is a shortage of properly trained horticulturists in the industry. This is due primarily to the public's misconception that horticulture is a second-class career with little need for skill. This has created a bad image of horticulturists in the public's eye, making it difficult to recruit students who are drawn to other careers in better appearing industries. This combined with the fact that horticulture has been undergoing a terrific expansion, has resulted in a shortage of properly-trained labor for both personnel and management positions.

Pershore Horticultural College is presently attempting to meet this shortage by producing a well-trained, practically-grounded student, who is often capable of assuming management positions immediately after graduation. The students who attend Pershore College must have at least one year's experience in industry or in parks and must be at least eighteen years old. They turn out men and women with a very high standard of education, both theoretically and most important, practically. The college has about one hundred resident students, so you can appreciate the close student-instructor contact.

The students are divided into different courses. For example, one covers Nursery Stock Production, including field and container-grown stock, with this particular course being the most popular. Glasshouse Production includes vegetables, flowers and fruit under glass, Fruit Growing and Market Gardening (which involves vegetable and flower production) is also offered.

At the end of their time spent at the College the students are expected to take examinations which are set by The Royal Hor-

tical Society covering the course material. These courses prepare them not only for the exams but also their place in the industry.

The courses vary in length from an intensive one year "Special Course", which covers everything from vegetable production to nursery crops, to a two-year "Sandwich Course", in the nursery or with commercial glasshouse crops. This course gets its name from the fact that the first year is spent at the college, with a middle year spent in the industry, which is later reviewed and studied during the final year at the college.

The range of studies is diverse, covering pests and diseases, soils and geology, to economic management and equipment maintenance. Also covered are botany and landscape maintenance.

The students are kept in touch with the practical aspects by not only having a lab section for every class, but also by maintaining equipment used on the college's farm, working on individual and group projects in the nursery or glass sections, keeping weather records and participating in crop planting, with these activities varying with the particular course of study.

In addition to these activities all students must develop what is called a "Plot" — an area of ground where they are allowed to grow what they wish, and where they are evaluated on their records and results. This provides a chance for students to grow crops which would normally not be covered in their courses. The students also take turns collecting plant specimens for identification from Pershore's vast and well-labeled grounds. All this is to insure that the students are well-grounded in the practical aspects of horticulture as well as the theoretical. To make sure the students are progressing satisfactorily, they are constantly being assessed or tested on their skills. This includes testing of their abilities to give instructions properly, and solving economic management problems.

The students are kept in groups, usually the same groups throughout their course. It was my experience to accompany the third-year nursery group on several visits to various growers. During these visits the students asked growers about everything from economic decisions to labor management problems. These discussions were frequently the subject for classes.

In this way the students, as well as the instructors, are kept in close contact with the industry. This is also done through various growers and nurserymen's conferences and exhibitions held at the College throughout the year. One such course, the January Nurserymen's Conference, brings growers together to listen to discussions on current problems in the industry. Growers from all over the British Isles are represented at these conferences.

Growers are all aware of Pershore's reputation, not only because of the many exhibitions and conferences which take place there but also because there are very few growers who do not have a Pershore College student either working for him or employed by him one at one time.

It is not uncommon for Pershore students to assume high management positions immediately after graduation. I personally know of one graduate who was offered a foreman's position on the single fact that he had attended Pershore; and I was told of a nursery student who's starting salary was higher than that of his instructor's. I say this not to impress anyone but to underline the high degree of the students' practical ability and their demand in the industry.

In addition to a very good curriculum for its resident students. Pershore also conducts a variety of courses for further education. These include a day release course for students working in industry with no previous formal training. Block release or short residential courses covering everything from arboriculture to specialized plant propagation; evening classes, and even an introductory course, familiarize young students with the world of plants.

In addition to these, several new courses are already being set up, one in garden center management and one in personnel management, these in addition to new short courses covering crop marketing and supervision practice. In conclusion, I would like to say that I was very impressed during my stay at Pershore College, not only with the course material and its practical content, but also the students themselves and their practical attitudes. I must say, though, that a technically-oriented education may have its advantages over a Bachelor of Science degree course, such as the one I am on. I must point out though that these two are very surprisingly similar in the practical way the information is put across.

MODERATOR FAZIO: Thank you, Martin. Next we have Paul Moore who will show slides and describe his experiences on the IPPS tour to England with the G. B. & I. Region. Paul is now superintendent of agricultural operations at the University of California, Riverside. Paul.¹

Friday Morning, September 6, 1974

VICE-PRESIDENT BATCHELLER: It is my great pleasure to introduce Dr. Howard Brown, who is the chairman of the Horticul-

¹ Ed. Note — Paul Moore narrated a series of slides he took on the 1973 G.B. & I. tour.

ture Department, California Polytechnic University, at San Luis Obispo. He will be chairing our panel on education this morning. Howard Brown.

MODERATOR BROWN: Thank you, Jolly. I know that we have gathered from some of our previous speakers the importance of training horticulturalists. This is the topic that our panel will be covering this morning. There are a great many jobs available in ornamental horticulture. I think it is our duty as educators to let the students know what is involved in these jobs. Many of our students are kind of shaken up when they find out that if they are going to be in ornamental horticulture they will probably have to live where the people are instead of going off into the boondocks. It is particularly important in production horticulture because it is the centers of population that consume our products. Also we have some environmentalists among the students who are against the use of insecticides and fungicides. And while this is fine in landscape areas where, like Disneyland and Sea World, and places like that, you can allow insects and pests to develop because your main concern is with the health and safety of the animals. We have reached that stage in the production of flowers and of woody ornamentals and we find this is particularly true when we place some of our students in summer employment and they go to work in greenhouse ranges and they are not willing to appear in the greenhouses the day after they are sprayed. So, it is part of our duty, I think, as educators to let the students know what is involved here and what they are going to get into.

In talking with employers I believe it is the lack of educated, trained personnel that is the most limiting factor in the expansion of their business. And so today we are going to have three talented speakers and myself who will enlighten you on what is going on in the training of horticulturalists. Our first speaker will be talking on the high school program. He is Daniel Lassanske, who transferred to Cal Poly at San Luis Obispo. He was with us there three years and received his B.S. and M.S. degrees. As a senior student and, after he graduated, he helped us teach some courses in plant materials and bonsai. He is in his third year of teaching at Poway High School here in San Diego County. He has a very active program, great enthusiasm among his students, and I think he is doing a fine job. Dan.