

THERE IS ALWAYS A GARDEN

by Elisabeth Carey Miller

Garden tour

Photographs by Don Norman

Horticulture is one science eminently suited to influence the urban environment through research and education on the effective use of plants.

Growing plants can be a fascinating experience, a mental and physical challenge, and an endless learning process, particularly here in the Pacific Coastal Northwest. Our region's many microclimates permit us to grow a greater representation of plant material than is possible in any other single area of the world.

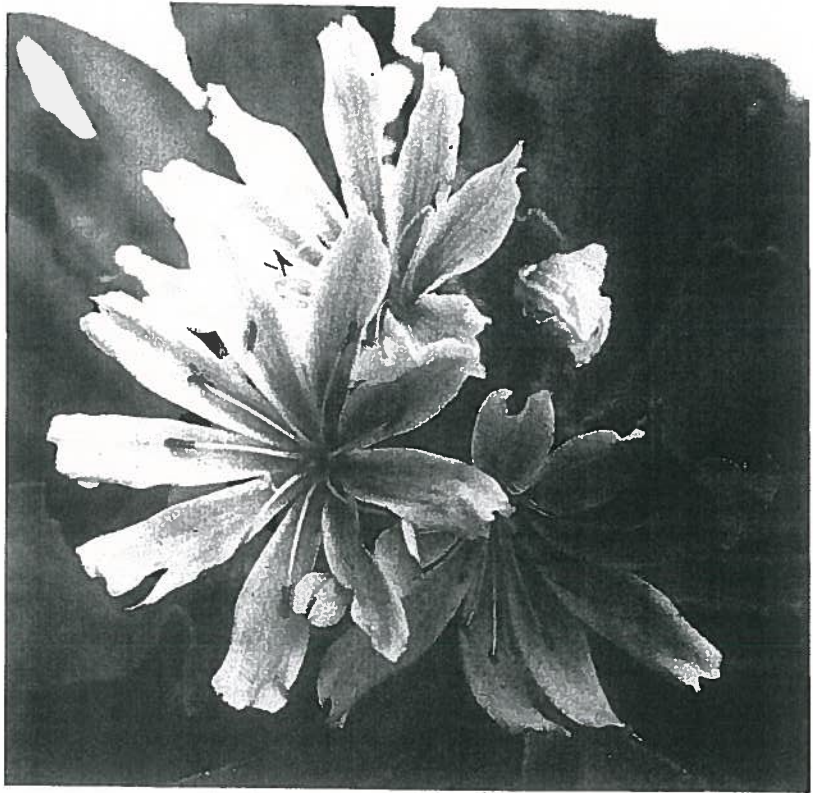
Motivated by the international and professional estimation of this area's horticultural potential, the Northwest Ornamental Horticultural Society (NOHS) was founded in 1966 to promote Northwest horticultural interests. The opportunity to give proof to the area's promise was wide open.

In 1969 NOHS staged a Horticultural Exhibit at the Pacific Science Center on the occasion of the Eleventh International Botanical Congress, and it was awarded an Achievement Medal by the American Horticultural Society. The year 1972 brought the society a number of awards and citations from national organizations as the result of undertaking another exhibit at the Pacific Science Center for the American Horticultural Society Annual Congress. The exhibit included a representation of nearly the entire plant kingdom, excluding tropical plants.

In 1976 another NOHS idea, a Horticultural Festival with the subtitle "Treasure our Earth," featured educational exhibits, flower arrangements, and a plant sale programmed by amateurs, public agencies, and plant societies. This overall function was coordinated by NOHS, for which the society won the coveted Bulkley Medal Award from the Garden Club of America, as well as special commendation for one of the NOHS exhibits.

As the only independent horticultural society in the Pacific Northwest, NOHS provides horticultural education programs for gardeners, landscape architects, nurserymen, and students. It provides financial support for scholarships, grants, and other horticultural endeavors. And it has been a primary force in the initiation of the Center for Urban Horticulture at the University of Washington, committing \$50,000 to its establishment.

The center is the first academic program of research, teaching, and continuing education in the United States on utilization of plants to maintain and enhance urban and suburban environments. This program has the potential of providing world leadership in urban horticulture, combining the unusually fine climate for growing plants of the Puget Sound Basin, a great research and teaching university in the midst of progressive urban centers, and the support of large and diverse horticultural and forestry industries and support organizations.



Monotropa uniflora (Indian pipes)

The NOHS is also involved with the public planting of our thoroughfares and public parks. It serves as a consequential source of information and education on environmentally tolerant plant material—plants that are tolerant of air pollution and drought, resistant to insects, and easy to maintain. Two current projects illustrate this support. The society has initiated a plan to provide seasonal color in Freeway Park with low-maintenance perennials to avoid the high cost of planting and maintaining annuals. Coordinating this effort with the city's park department, it is also promoting contributions to offset the \$70,000 cost. The second effort will implement a landscape plan for a Heritage Garden at the Museum of History and Industry in cooperation with the city, the university, and the supporting foundation.

The meat of the NOHS educational efforts is its Lecture Series, designed for everyone who will ever plant a plant. Supporting organizations are King County's Co-Operative Extension Service, Lake Washington Garden Club, Seattle Garden Club, Tacoma Garden

Club, Unit Council of the Arboretum Foundation, and the Washington State Federation of Garden Clubs. And in yet another effort to stimulate the interests of gardeners, NOHS publishes a journal, *Horticulture Northwest*.

Income for all NOHS activities is generated wholly within the private sector, and all responsibilities are carried by volunteers. A percentage of both the dues from the 600 members and lecture admissions covers basic operating costs. At the age of fifteen years, NOHS has contributed nearly \$150,000 to horticultural programs, and it has become recognized nationally as one of the most forward-thinking, independent horticultural organizations in the United States.

continued

Elisabeth Carey Miller, a former member of the Junior League of Seattle, is a founder and current board member of the Northwest Ornamental Horticulture Society. She has been involved in numerous civic projects over the past twenty-five years, and she has been widely recognized for her contributions to the field of horticulture.

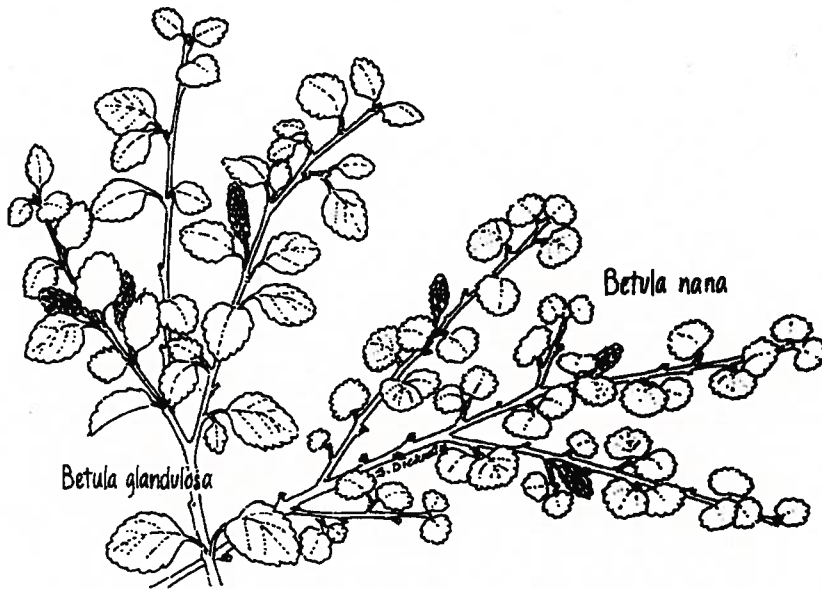


Illustration reprinted by permission from Horticulture Northwest, the journal of NOHS

The joy of gardening should be watching, rather than laboring, over the healthy growth of plants. While there is no substitute for personal experience in learning, the NOHS Lecture Series offers practical guidance. Here are some of the topics and teasers covered in the series.

Root rot, rarely recognized and incurable, is a primary cause of plant mortality in the Northwest. It is commonly caused by poor drainage. If the plant looks unhappy, should you fertilize or give it more water? If it has root rot, both are wrong. Fertilizer will force a plant to produce more lush top growth temporarily, but damaged roots cannot support such growth for long. If the crown of the roots is below soil level, root rot will surely occur.

Why do leaves curl or drop in cold or hot weather extremes? This is a mode of self-protection in limiting the exposure of the leaf to the weather. Every plant has evolved to survive. Have confidence in its natural mechanisms.

Seattle is one of the few major cities developed on glacial strata. This means we have layers of hard clay that create serious drainage and slippage problems. Clay does contain nutrients that are beneficial to a plant if they are made available. Knowing how to provide them is an asset.

Proactive planning can reduce plant maintenance. The practical trend toward growing species plants in their native habitat eliminates the need to fertilize, spray, or water, and they can reproduce themselves genetically. This is not so with

the hybrids of our garden ornamentals. The genetics are lost in the process, causing the seed to be unreliable. In many cases, the beauty of the plant's form is lost, as it is hybridized for flower size, color, or hardiness. There are, it is true, many desirable hybrids, but most are more dependent on the gardener's support and are less resistant to insects.

Pruning is a must in garden education. If improperly done, harmful microorganisms can enter and can cause a slow mortality immune from any amount of spraying. Pruning at the proper time makes a plant more vigorous; at the improper time, it can dwarf it. Mistakes are difficult to correct.

As for mulches, some are good for sunny exposures and very bad in shade, or vice versa. Did you know that the oak leaves are a better winter mulch than the beech or native maple leaves? The rains of our Northwest turn the latter into a slimy mush that harbors slugs.

The natural biological activity of thousands of forms of life in the soil are important to a plant's roots. Therefore, do not rob the plant by sterilizing it.

Use precaution with insecticides. Some insects are good insects; do not control a

pest if it is not a problem. And insecticide can upset the insect balance around the neighboring plants.

Do birds take their toll on good insects? Does anyone really know? Are lichens, moss, and fungi harmful?

No two gardens have identical conditions. There are as many as ninety different microclimates in the average town garden. Does this matter? Some plants can tolerate stagnant air pockets; others cannot. The same is true of plant tolerance for wind factors.

If a plant likes morning sun and afternoon shade, it may not like morning shade and afternoon sun. Why?

You know that drainage is important, but do you know why and the many ways of providing it? The web of root systems under a thick planting creates a ceiling which directs the rodent runs to a lower level. This is one method of providing a good, natural drainage system.

Ground covers should be planted extensively. They can eliminate weeds, provide natural processing of the soil, and prevent the freezing or drying out of the plant roots. Some ground covers are much more serviceable than others and can add beauty.

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cover

PHOTOGRAPH

BY

MARTHA F. MURPHY

In the afternoon sunshine of spring, Martha Murphy captures the brilliant color and regal form of tulips in the Skagit River Valley. Photographs of the tulip fields in which the cover close-up was filmed are shown on pages 22 and 23. Murphy is a free-lance nature photographer, and she also has a specialized interest in reproducing old family photographs.

A native of Montana who recently moved to this area, Murphy affiliated with the Junior League of Seattle, serving as the current photography editor of *Puget Soundings*. She is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Seattle Photographic Society.

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