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arts and architecture

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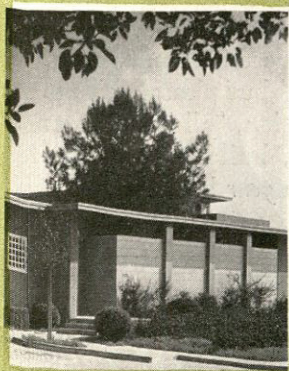
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THE COVER



Entrance to a town house
for the Edwin Loeb's by
Sumner Spaulding, F.A.I.A.

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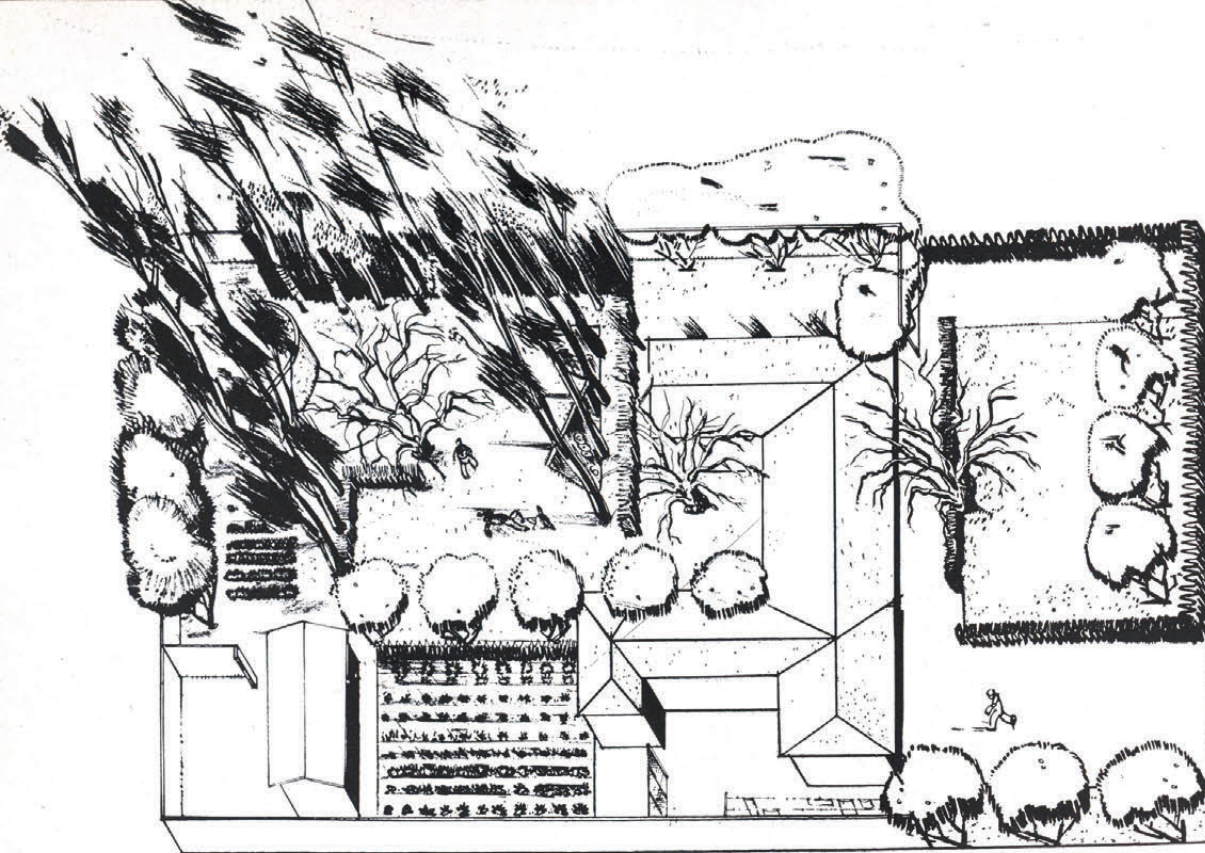
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A GARDEN OF PURPLE PLUMS, EUCALYPTI, PLEACHED SYCAMORES, AND ACACIAS

Drawing by William Burgett

Are You A PLANT SNOB?

by James C. Rose

"What *are* those trees?" asked my client pointing fearfully to the sketch. "Not eucalyptus!" His voice trailed off on a dry wind that swept the valley, and echoed in a thousand homes from San Diego to San Francisco. Not eucalyptus! Please, not eucalyptus. Anxiety gathered in his face like liquid sunshine. All his faith in trees, in landscapes, and in people rested on my answer. But, alas, the trees *were* eucalyptus.

Nothing grows under eucalyptus trees, they say. The bark shreds and the leaves fall. But have you seen the lush gardens of La Miniatura in Pasadena? Or the Shakespeare park on the fair grounds at San Diego? The eucalyptus rises a hundred feet above tropical undergrowth. It doesn't even object to a concrete reproduction of the Globe theater.

Have you ever listened to the eucalyptus in the wind and watched the trunk bend like wire to the ground? Did you know that some two hundred varieties range from solid black to platinum blonde? Why do we see the in-between varieties mainly, instead of rich stands in black and white?

Take the purple plum tree—no one else wants it. The landscape instructor says it is "very difficult, very difficult. The color doesn't blend." It contrasts with the blonde eucalyptus, and along a white wall the effect is stunning. But take care—contrasts are dangerous. They give you a lift.

"All right, all right. You still can't use Italian cypress." The nurseryman eyes the straight rows of pathetic little spikes with scorn and pity. His conscience makes him reluctant even to sell them. They grow too fast in the open field, so he clips them. Then, somehow, they always bend at the top like a cankerous banana, and when you see them spotted haphazardly among variegated pansies and petunias you blame it on the cypress.

Have you seen the gardens of the Villa D'Este? Someone planted the same cypress there, long ago. Hundreds of cypress, and no one complains. But we have never learned how to use the Italian cypress in America.

The professor from Wisconsin has a theory. "Use only plants indigenous with the advent of the white man." Let us maintain the status quo even in plants . . .

When the white man came, he brought a plant. He brought seeds and roots. He even called his ship the Mayflower. A rose bush in Arizona is a scion from a bridal wreath sent from England a hundred years ago.

This keeping plants where they belong is quite a problem. Plants were shifting their positions before the advent of any man. They moved on glaciers, on rivers, and on the wind. What we need is a fence, I tell you. A tall fence and a strong fence to keep a nutshell from floating down the river, animals from moving with burdock in their fur, the birds from flying south, and the wind from blowing milkweed into Minnesota. The professor will no doubt write a book categorizing indigenous plants. It will be easy then to build the fence.

Luther Burbank didn't ask where a plant came from. He used it. He used the method of science . . . The variety of fruits and vegetables we have today comes from this method. Importation, cross breeding, scientific control and development . . . Art is different. Art is exclusive. Even a Mayflower background doesn't guarantee a plant will be acceptable, except perhaps in New England. Art is mysterious.

When a plant is brought in from the wild and used in cultivation, its basic physiological requirements must be satisfied for growth. It makes no difference whether the plant is taken from San Fernando Valley or the hills of China, the change to cultivation requires adjustment. The process has occurred regularly since man first began to use plants for food and medicine.

Better orchids grow in the laboratory than in the jungle; better vegetables under irrigation than in the wild; better fruits in the orchard than in nature. It is a common misapprehension that plants suffer from the change. That they do better in their native habitat. In short, there is a sentimentalism about plants and nature which endows them with qualities they do not possess. It is all a part of the Rousseauian philosophy that swept the world a century ago when it appeared easier to take off one's shoes and return to the wilderness than to master and exploit the developments of science.

Science, however, has freed itself from sentimentalism and superstition by its very method. But art, particularly the garden, still drips a saccharine fluid of elves, associations, and mysterious nights. You can make an evening dress of spun glass or metal fabric or a pair of shoes from alligator skin, but in the garden you must pretend that everything is natural and native.

But let's indulge in the righteousness of being practical. Forget that art is mysterious. We have a problem (Continued on page 46)



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ART

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 45

30. Hazel McKinley, well-known in England, paints charming landscapes and street scenes. She has a delightful sense of color, to which her swirling brush adds a gay, amusing touch. Her paintings, excellent decorations, are full of life and animation. Raymond and Raymond is presenting a retrospective exhibition of the work of Edward Biberman from the 7th to the 26th of April. Biberman, a well-known mural painter, is showing easel paintings selected from his last ten years' work. About a third of these have never before been exhibited. Included in the show are recently completed portraits of Katherine Cornell and Amanda Duff. A benefit for the American Rescue Ship Mission will open the exhibit on the night of April 6. P. S.

BUILDING FOR YOUTH

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 29

cordance with the most carefully studied and stimulating principles laid down by the N.Y.A. planning office in Washington under the progressive direction of David R. Williams, chief architect, whose earlier educational practice in Texas has constructively influenced an entire generation of young designers and craftsmen. Emphasis is justly placed on the material economy and simplicity of N.Y.A. structures throughout the nation.

Naturally, the conditions of the plot, the relation to the roads and communications, the climatic conditions of California require specific treatment of the project, which now receives a further almost symmetrical extension into the campus of the adjoining Polytechnical College. Two ribbons of dormitories stretching along the contours of the hill slope, wash rooms, laundry rooms and supervisors' rooms, a study hall, a mess hall with large fireplace and sitting space, kitchen and service quarters, and finally independent supervisors' family cottages and garages, constitute the space program of this project. It was executed by youth and dedicated by Mr. Burns last fall to the services of youth busy with most practical studies in the technical shops nearby.

While working on these N.Y.A. building problems I was deeply impressed by the all-around socio-economic significance of the broad N.Y.A. training program and its importance for a future generation of young men skilled and much needed in the various building trades and at the drafting boards of planners and architects. Aubrey Williams, administrator of N.Y.A., in a lucid lecture given in Los Angeles a short time ago, presented a striking analysis of the pressing vocational problems of youth throughout the nation, and he justly feels proud of the unusually cooperative spirit and sound training which such projects impart to young American people.

ARE YOU A PLANT SNOB

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in the garden—a problem very much like buying an outfit. The hat may come from Panama, the coat from Scotland, the shoes from Florida, and the boutonniere from an Australian honey vine in your own backyard. It makes no difference. The important thing is whether the outfit suits its purpose. It would be little virtue and no satisfaction to know that a straw hat was made from California wheat if it were three sizes too large.

And yet, who hasn't seen a garden party of fifty ladies heap adoration on an assortment of cankerous weeds from the desert when a few purple plum trees and a eucalyptus might have given them a garden?

MUSIC

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

The truth of the matter is, however, that a few recordings by the old Lener, made well over ten years ago, or by the now almost forgotten Capet group, and one of the last quartet, opus 135, by the Flonzaley, have never been surpassed, for all the improvement in sound technique, by any later issue. Connoisseurs, buying for the music, will do well to ask for these during so long a time as they may continue available.