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## Keeping California Beautiful

ONE OF CALIFORNIA'S greatest assets is its natural beauty, enhanced by an unusual geographical variety featuring everything from deserts to mountains, and from seashore to unexcelled farming valleys. Nearly every possible plant and commercial crop (except tropical) can be grown, as a result of the excellent climate, the availability of water and good soil, and agricultural research. This natural beauty is now being threatened by the pressures of population, and various political and profit motives.

There is no excuse today, in this state that will grow everything, for a lack of natural beauty anywhere. Urban sprawl or blighted rural development without regard for the landscape should not be tolerated. In recent years, the federal government has made notable progress in promoting the idea of a beautiful America. With all its natural advantages, California can and should be the model for all the states.

People of today who commute to cities and work within concrete and steel need the privacy, softening, quiet, and beauty that can come from plantings of trees, shrubs, and flowers. Communities of people need the identity that can come from separation by agricultural green belts or parklands.

Parks and landscaping are essential to cities. It should be possible to travel within parkways most of the way from the center of a city to its periphery. Golden Gate Park in San Francisco and Balboa Park in San Diego offer notable examples of such possibilities. Some California cities, such as Fresno and Santa Monica, have closed streets to traffic and have replaced them with landscaped pedestrian malls. Los Angeles has a downtown street tree planting program, sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce. Some cities have rose gardens.

University research in ornamental plants has been a basic factor in the many trends toward the development of the horticulture of our environment. Among these is the increasing use of interior plants—sometimes even trees of considerable size—both in homes and in commercial structures. Roof gardens and parks on concrete are now a common sight in many of our highrise city centers, thanks to research on planting containers, soil mixes, fertilization, and automatic irrigation and drainage systems.

After creating many dreary wastelands and city eyesores, modern industry has changed its attitude and is underwriting programs of beautification. Many new industries now have attractively landscaped grounds that add to the beauty of the community. Landscaping, plus good architecture, improves employee morale and public image.

Supporting such beautification here and across the nation, is an ornamental or environmental horticulture business with production valued at well over 200 million dollars annually in California (comparable in magnitude with some of our major crops). Cut flowers, foliage, and pot plants have a wholesale value of almost 90 million. Replacement installation cost for all turfgrass areas in California was recently estimated at \$307,657. The cool coastal areas offer year-round air conditioning for our large glasshouse flower industry. Extensive field acreages and many cloth houses (often with night lighting to control bloom periods) are producing cut flowers in many areas of the state.

Wholesale markets of Los Angeles and San Francisco handle about 300 different florist items, and about half of our cut flower production is shipped out of these cities by air freight. Rose plant production has been particularly successful in the San Joaquin Valley. California now produces about 65 per cent of the world's flower seed with production centered in the coastal valleys of central California. Increasing numbers of commercial gardeners, homeowners, and landscape planners have been using bedding plants started commercially in containers; this has become a highly mechanized and important California industry. University researchers from Los Angeles, Davis, Berkeley, and Riverside work closely with the industry to improve production methods and quality.

Ecological thinking is becoming part of social planning, as men realize they live in a delicate balance with nature. Men must learn not to pollute the environment, and they must also learn to beautify it. In America, a start has hardly been made either in the city or country. The full potential of the horticulture of the environment is for the future—and should become one of the features of the affluent society.