

the more serious problems of air pollution. So I think we shouldn't underestimate the problem of air pollution because it is becoming more serious and we're going to have to keep our eyes on it.

RAY HALWARD: Coming from a steel town from the south I think we have two problems; we take air pollution out and put water pollution on and I'm not sure which is worse. Our next speaker James Wells is one of our oldest and most valued members and he is what I would consider a controversial figure because he's always in there punching and this is what makes these meetings. It gives me great pleasure to introduce Jim Wells who will tell us what a British propagator is.

WHAT IS A BRITISH PROPAGATOR?

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The other day I was quietly eating my lunch when the phone rang. It was Dave Dugan requesting that I give this talk. It was my own fault, of course, because I had written to him suggesting that he was producing a mystery program. You would have thought after all these years that I would have learned to keep my mouth shut.

You may know by now that a British Region of I.P.P.S. has come into being and that we are to discuss this in the business meeting. As a prelude Dave thought it would be a good idea for me to try to tell you what a British propagator is. I must own this request set me back momentarily and when he went on to add that I was the only British propagator that many of the members had ever met, I was quite frankly stumped. So in order to get off the phone and finish my lunch, I agreed.

My first reaction was, of course, that there is no difference and fundamentally this is true. At the recent meeting which I had the pleasure of attending in England it was abundantly clear that put a "gaggle" of propagators together in a room in England or America and the net result is precisely the same. We're all interested in plants, we're all interested in techniques, we're all interested in the day to day problems which each of us has. So in this broad sense there just is no difference.

But then I went on to think a little closer and I realized that there were a few minor differences which could be pointed out because they will inevitably effect the development and the emphasis of the British Region and quite rightly so, too. The average English nursery is far more interested in individual plant varieties than its counterpart over here and this is because the average English customer is keenly interested in the difference between a Rhodendron 'Cynthia' and Rhododen-

dron 'Pink Pearl' or in any of the varieties of *Camellia reticulata* as compared with either *C. sasanqua* or *C. japonica* varieties. Because of this interest the average English nursery must carry a wide range of varieties and not only that but a wide range of plants, also. To illustrate what I mean you have but to look at the current catalogue of the Hillier Nurseries in England which is a book of some substantial proportions. I recall a nursery in my hometown which carried an equally wide range of plant materials but because we were in an area where heathers were grown successfully they carried over 250 named varieties of *Ericas* and *Calunas*. This interest in the details of plant material was eloquently illustrated in the taped speech which we heard by Brian Humphrey and Peter Dummer and you may recall that they discussed many of the finer points of compatibility between different stocks and scions together with the propagation problems of many plants rarely seen in this country. The British propagator is, therefore, first of all a man with a very wide knowledge of plant materials and the detailed techniques required to propagate these efficiently. He tends to be less of a specialist grower than does his counterpart over here.

Second, the English propagator by and large tends to be a man who is employed by a firm. There are not so many owner-propagators in England as there seems to be here. He is, therefore, a corporate man with both the advantages and the restrictions which such a position implies.

I would like to digress for a moment to explain why it has taken so long to bring about the establishment of an European Region. We all know, I am sure, of the legacy of secrecy with which propagation procedures used to be surrounded. This attitude goes back to the Victorian era 100 years ago when there was a substantial period of uninterrupted peace in Europe with its associated prosperity. This period produced conditions conducive to a really substantial effort on the part of the horticulturists of the time and it is probably true to say that at no time before or since has so much effort and money been invested in the production of new horticultural varieties and the introduction of new plants collected from various parts of the world. The degree of effort is almost incomprehensible to us now and the investment even by today's standards must have been tremendous. In Rhododendrons alone, field after field of seedlings was raised under the careful and close scrutiny of the nursery foreman and the crosses which resulted in these seedlings were kept a closely guarded secret. If you look in the Rhododendron stud book in which records of crosses are now recorded you will see that most of the old varieties have no recorded parents. From such field after the plants had developed for a number of years, perhaps half a dozen plants were selected as being outstanding and these were further tested and finally a selection made. The good standby of our Rhododendron trade at the present time here in this country,

Roseum elegans, was a product of this system and the fact that it is still one of the best commercial varieties speaks volumes for the system.

Now, the only way in which such an effort and investment could be protected was to ensure that the introducers of a new plant had a clear field for some years to sell his new introductions at a high price and thus recoup their investment. Secrecy, therefore, was essential and this habit born of necessity has carried over from generation to generation and is only now dying out. A new breed of young and uninhibited propagators has arisen and these young men together with their employers are now convinced that this attitude is restrictive and in the long run unproductive and they have realized that if they are to take their proper place in the modern world they must adopt modern methods. This change, which is quite recent, has taken place in the minds of both the employer and the employees and it is largely because of this change that the British Region of the I.P.P.S. is now in existence.

There is one final difference in the propagator of this country and of Europe and this is in the category of the skilled amateur. Such a person tends to be somewhat of a rarity over here but not so in Europe and particularly in England. Many wealthy men have taken up horticulture as a hobby in England and having both the time and the means to develop their interests they have become extremely knowledgeable and skilled in whatever branch they choose to follow. A prime example would be Lionel de Rothchild who was personally responsible for the selection of the parents and the hybridizing of the plants which produced the Exbury Azaleas. This was a process requiring a high degree of perception and skill but it had to be supported by equal skill on the part of the superintendent Mr. Hanger who undoubtedly was responsible for the production of the seedlings and the ultimate propagation of the selected plants. Both of these men were good propagators each in his own sphere. There are many people in this category in Europe and I hope that the quality of this type of horticulturist will be recognized as the British Region develops.

There is one last and perhaps the most important difference brought about by the quality of the English climate. Generally speaking I think it is much easier to grow any plants in England than it is over here and, therefore, the economic pressures which exist in America to produce a good plant are not so intense in England and the result has been less of an emphasis on techniques in England but a much greater emphasis on plant materials.

It should be clear that on both sides of the Atlantic we have a great deal to learn from each other and it is therefore with real pleasure that I watched the establishment of the British Region last September. I believe that we can help them and I know that they can help us. This is surely the real heart of our Society and I look forward with great expectations to

the vigorous development of these ideas in the British Region.

RAY HALWARD: That was a very very nice presentation Jim, thank you. Would anyone care to ask Jim a question?

PETER VERMEULEN: This is not a question Jim but rather regards the terminology of the region. Being British Jim has referred to it as a Chapter but I would like to ask that you change it from Chapter to Region in your manuscript so that when it is read in England they will no longer carry it on and we will be consistant in having the Eastern Region, Western Region, and British Region.

FREEK VRUGTMAN: I was interested to hear that the British Region got off the ground. When my wife and I were in England in 1967 we had an occassion to discuss this possibility with various nurserymen and plant propagators and at that time we wrote to Jim about it. Later that year we went to the continent and visited nurseries and botanical gardens in western Germany. There we discussed the same idea with many people but we found quite a bit of resistance to forming such an organization there. There were several reasons for this: 1.) There were very few people there working on propagation as is done on this continent; we found that each specialist in the nurseries and botanic gardens did what propagation was necessary for their section. 2.) We also found that there was very little contact between the colleagues doing plant propagation in any one institution. 3.) This third point concerns the relationship to Boskoop in Holland. In discussing this over there we found that the problems in plant propagation in Boskoop are unique and any work done in plant propagation there pertains directly to the problems which they have. There appears to be little interest in going out and seeking information from other areas.

JIM WELLS: Your absolutely right and I have been aware of the problem. There is an absolute brick wall and it's going to take some work to overcome this.

PETER VERMEULEN: Concerning the brick wall which you say we have in Europe Jim I don't think anything is impenetrable and for the record I would take issue with those people in Europe who say their problems are unique. Several years back I mentioned to this great Society that none of us has ever had a completely original thought; everything we say, think, do and hope to do will be dependent on that which has gone on before us. Therefore anything that we have that can add to our fellow men in Europe and anything that they have, have done and can do, can add to what we need and can hope to receive here. I would therefore hope that they would strike from their language the words "unique to them."