

## Horticultural Exhibitions

During the past century literally thousands of horticultural shows and exhibitions have been held in Iowa. This is quite natural, for producers of horticultural crops are no different than their fellow Iowans who produce livestock, corn or grain. These producers are proud of their results and like to compete with their fellow growers to see who has the best.

As soon as the first orchards which had been planted along the Mississippi River came into bearing, their owners started to display their products at local fairs or shows. Orchards of that day contained dozens of varieties of apples, pears, plums, and peaches. Several large fruit shows were staged at Burlington, and eastern visitors were amazed at the quality and quantity of these exhibits. In 1859 a horticultural society was formed at Davenport, and in June and September of that year it staged two exhibits of horticultural products.

Meanwhile, there were exhibits of apples, pears, potatoes, and other vegetables, at the first State Fair held in Fairfield in 1854. At the fourth State Fair held in Oskaloosa in 1857, premiums were offered on flowers for the first time. At every one of

the over 100 annual State Fairs held since that time large displays of flowers, fruits, and vegetables have dominated the agricultural displays. Since 1930, the Federated Garden Clubs of Iowa have had charge of the flower and flower arrangements displays. The State Gladiolus Society has sponsored many exhibits of this late summer flower. There was a period prior to World War II when very creditable exhibits of native nuts were displayed. Honey and honey products have been one of the main attractions in the Agricultural Building for many years.

Apple displays dominated the early State Fairs. Premiums were offered on the largest and best display of apple varieties, and the older exhibitors used to have a tree or two of many odd varieties in their orchards just to be able to include the variety in their displays at the Fair. As late as 1925, between 300 and 400 different varieties of apples could be found on exhibition besides large collections of plums, grapes, and pears. At recent State Fairs the number has been reduced to 40 or 50 different varieties of apples.

Although exhibitors are always changing, competition seems to get in the blood of many people and they show up year after year to vie for the blue ribbons and the premium money. There are several exhibitors who have shown fruit and vegetables for over 25 years and a few have not missed a Fair in over 40 years.

*National Shows*

During the earlier years of the State Horticultural Society many exhibits of Iowa fruit were collected and displayed at National meetings of fruitgrowers and at various World Fairs. In 1869 Mark Miller, editor of the *Iowa Homestead*, collected fruits from various Iowa orchardists and sent them to Boston to a meeting of the American Pomological Society where they "received prizes and favorable comment."

In 1876 the Society decided to enter a display of Iowa fruit at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition as part of the Iowa Exhibit. Colonel Gustavus Brackett, then president of the Society, was commissioned to stage this display. To make a creditable display early in the season, Colonel Brackett developed the idea of using wax or plaster cast fruits. Colonel Brackett and a Mrs. Greenland made 1,000 specimens consisting of 300 varieties, mostly of apples, that were used during the early days of the Exposition. These were later replaced by the actual fruit as it ripened. Colonel Brackett gained a wide reputation from the wax apples and also from his ability to correctly identify varieties of fruit.

The Horticultural Society also staged a display of Iowa fruit at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. The exhibit during the early summer was in charge of C. L. Watrous of Des Moines. Later A. F. Collman of Corning was put

in charge. Due to his efforts, about 100 bushels of fruit were sent to Chicago and a total of 3,400 plates (five apples to a plate) were displayed. The exhibit contained 427 varieties of apples, 80 of grapes, 59 of plums, 25 of pears, and 10 of peaches. About 1,000 people living in 60 Iowa counties contributed fruit, although most of it came from Mills County which at that time was the center of apple production in Iowa. Iowa was awarded a medal for the best display of fruit.

Still another large exhibit of Iowa fruit was displayed at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1904. Silas Wilson of Atlantic, J. W. Murphy of Glenwood, and Chas. O. Garrett of Des Moines were responsible for this fruit display. They collected two refrigerator cars of late keeping apples during the fall of 1903 and put them in cold storage in St. Louis. These were displayed during the early summer and, later, were replaced by fruit from the 1904 crop. In all, over 12,000 plates of 300 varieties were displayed, twice as many as any other state. Iowa received the grand prize and medal.

In 1909 and 1910, under the sponsorship of interested citizens in Council Bluffs and people interested in fruitgrowing in Iowa, two national horticultural congresses were held. Premiums were offered on fruits, vegetables, nuts, flowers, and plants, canned and dried fruits, and vegetables. The 1910 show drew exhibits from 30 states in-

cluding exhibits from Florida, North Carolina, Colorado, Idaho, Oregon, and Nebraska, as well as from Iowa.

The year of 1918 marked the beginning of another series of horticultural shows of regional interest. They were all called Midwest Horticultural Expositions. In all, nine expositions were held. The first was held in the old Coliseum in Des Moines in December, just a few weeks after the end of World War I. At first they were held annually but later every two years. Three were held in Des Moines, two in Council Bluffs, and one each in Cedar Rapids, Shenandoah, and Waterloo. The last was held in Marshalltown in 1932. These were large shows. They were financed in part by an \$8,000 appropriation made by the Iowa Legislature. Local people, officers, and members of the State Horticultural Society spent many hours in the planning, preparation, and staging of these expositions. Robert S. Herrick, secretary of the State Society, was more responsible for the success of these shows than anyone else. Exhibits of fruits and vegetables were entered from most of the Midwestern states, with some displays from states far removed from Iowa. Most of the flower displays were staged by Iowa florists, although at Cedar Rapids seven ladies entered a competition of shadow boxes, and at the shows at Shenandoah and Marshalltown the Federated Garden Clubs of Iowa took a leading part in staging flower ex-

hibits. Premiums were offered on apples, nuts, flowers, plants, honey, and vegetables. Junior exhibits and demonstrations by 4-H groups played an important part in the daily programs.

These expositions did much to focus the attention of the general public on the role played by horticulture in the economy of the State.

Literally thousands of exhibits of fruits, vegetables, and flowers have been staged over the years at Iowa county fairs. In some cases these have consisted of large exhibits of many kinds and varieties of horticultural products. In some shows the displays were small. Until the 1930's most of the exhibits of fruits, vegetables, and flowers were combined under one superintendent. Also often included were the corn and grain displays. But with the development of local garden clubs the display of flowers, plants, and flower arrangements were separated and were put in charge of the local garden club. There have been many county fairs that have sponsored large horticultural displays. Usually the size of the display depended upon the interest shown by the local people and upon the amount of the premiums offered. Among the larger exhibits of fruits, vegetables, and flowers held especially during the 1920 to 1950 period, the following can be named with the possibility of leaving out many other fairs that have had fine displays:

Clay County Fair, Des Moines County Fair, Marion

County Fair, Kossuth County Fair, Mahaska County Fair, Marshall County Fair, Scott County Fair, Lee County Fair, Humboldt County Fair, Woodbury County Fair, All-Iowa Fair of Cedar Rapids, and Cerro Gordo County Fair.

With the reorganization of many county fairs into 4-H shows, horticultural exhibits at many have been reduced. On the other hand many have been enlarged and improved. For instance, at the Linn County 4-H Fair at Central City there have been from 75 to 100 vegetable collections displayed by the members of 4-H Garden Clubs. In general, especially since World War II, flowers and flower arrangements have played an increasingly larger role in the horticultural displays while the emphasis on fruit and vegetables has been reduced.

#### *Special Flower Shows*

Many state shows have been held where usually only one kind of flower has been exhibited. The more common kinds are rose, gladiolus, peony, iris, and chrysanthemum shows.

At two different times, in June of both 1924 and 1932, the Iowa Peony and Iris Society cooperating with the American Peony Society, sponsored large shows of national interest in Iowa. The 1924 show filled the old Coliseum in Des Moines with peonies from all over the country. The 1932 show was held at the State Fair Grounds in Des Moines and drew over 10,000 people.

There are many local gladiolus shows staged

every summer. For years such shows have been held in connection with the State Fair. The first was held in 1923. A very active Iowa Rose Society has staged many rose exhibitions during the past 40 years. At the present time, each year a state and four regional shows are sponsored by this organization.

The National Rose Show was held in the Hotel Savery in Des Moines June 26 and 27, 1936, and was sponsored by the American Rose Society and the Iowa Rose Society.

#### *Garden Club Shows*

One of the principal activities of local garden clubs from the time they were first organized was to hold annually one or more local flower shows. Sometimes these were in conjunction with the county fair, but usually they were individual shows sponsored entirely by the local garden club. During the period prior to the formation of the Federated Garden Clubs of Iowa, several Des Moines and nearby garden clubs sponsored exhibits at the State Fair. Since the Federation was organized in 1928, it has sponsored three state-wide shows. In 1930 members first assumed management of the flower displays at the State Fair. This show has increased in size and interest over the past 35 years and perhaps is seen by more people than any other similar exhibit. Since 1933 the Federated Garden Clubs with the help of local garden clubs have sponsored a large flower



show at the Dairy Cattle Congress at Waterloo. The year 1965 marked the 32nd year the Federated Garden Clubs had staged a Holiday Show. This was started in 1934 and is held in connection with their annual meeting. Most of these meetings and shows have been held in the Memorial Union on the campus at Ames in October or November. Since few flowers are available at that season, the displays consisted of artistic arrangements depicting a given theme or idea. Usually the theme centered around Thanksgiving or Christmas. Here can be seen some of the most artistic and ingenious arrangements imaginable.

Space does not permit giving proper credit to the hundreds of people who have spent many long hours in planning, staging, exhibiting, and judging these many shows. To them it has been a duty and a pleasure to help in displaying the horticultural abundance of our great state.

*Some Iowa Plant Collection Centers*

On June 27, 1959, the State Center Rose Garden was established in the town of State Center, which was proclaimed the Rose Capitol of Iowa. Governor Loveless was the principal speaker at the dedication ceremony. Mrs. W. A. Norcross of Cedar Falls along with Charles Lieberstein of Davenport, both past presidents of the Iowa Rose Society, were responsible for the initial planning. They have received excellent cooperation from local people in State Center. There are over 3,000

rose bushes in the garden, consisting of hundreds of varieties. Each year a Rose Festival is held.

The City Park Department of Des Moines has established two excellent plant collections. The most complete collection of flowering crabs in the world, over 300 varieties, was assembled in Water Works Park under the late Arie F. den Boer, world authority on the flowering crabs. In Ewing Park, George W. Madison assembled an excellent collection of lilacs. In all there are 1,890 bushes including 213 varieties of lilac.

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