

THE NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN  
BRONX PARK (FORDHAM BRANCH P. O.)  
NEW YORK, N. Y.

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HENRY DE LA MONTAGNE, JR.

Frère Marie-Victorin  
Directeur de l'Institut Botanique  
Université de Montréal

November 7, 1932

Dear Dr. Victorin :

I wish to thank you again for the opportunity you gave me to see the site of your botanical garden and the start you have made. All this looked very promising and hopeful, and it was extremely interesting for me. It does seem, indeed, as if the city had committed itself considerably by permitting you to go as far as you did, and it should be almost impossible for them to back out anymore. I was rather sorry that the city officials to whom you had intended to introduce me, could not come, but, perhaps, it was better after all that they did not come. They might have been unfavorably impressed by my inability to understand your Canadian French. Perhaps, you do not like me to say so, but it seemed to me that your pronunciation and ways of speech differed markedly from the Parisian French. Only 2 days after I came to France, some five years ago, I attended a meeting of the société horticulture de France, and I had no difficulty to understand what they were talking about, while more than four-fifth of your conversation was lost upon me. It is very much the same, if you go to England speaking an American English. You will, at first, find it difficult to make yourself understood as well as to understand. However, it is only a matter of a few days, until your ear gets accustomed to the difference in sound, after which you are allright. I shall make a serious effort now to brush up my French, and, when I come up to Montréal to stay, I shall take a room with a French Canadian family where I have to speak French and shall take lessons besides. I am sure that within a very few weeks I shall then be able to converse in French with anybody.

We did not get as much of a chance to talk quietly together about the problems of the garden as I had hoped we might. Still, I got a few very important points from you like, for instance, that the public road which would have cut the garden in two halves can, probably, be avoided; that the garden will have to supply plant material for lecture courses and schools; and that you are in favor of devoting the garden mainly to the education of the public and not almost exclusively to the scientific study of plants as has been the custom heretofore. As to the latter point I had intended to give you an outline of the principals according to which, as I believe, a modern botanical garden should be laid out, and which will probably appear as an article in the magazine "Parks & Recreation". This article is based on the outline of a program which I sent you in the early summer, but it goes more into details. I am enclosing a copy of it in this letter, since I believe that it will interest you. Perhaps, that you can use parts of it in your propaganda drive. When the development of the garden gets under way, and as soon as the maps are designed, we can, perhaps, publish a pamphlet along these lines, illustrating it with some of the maps and with some perspective drawings of what certain parts will

give  
you

Fr. Marie-Victorin, B.

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look like when they are finished. Something like that might be very helpful in stirring up widespread interest in your project. Within two years or so after work on the garden has been started, we could commence to give public lecture courses on the fundamentals of gardening which could be rendered very instructive by using the construction work under way as illustration.

Public information on plants and their treatment in house and garden can, of course, be disseminated as soon as I have established myself in the pavillon. Perhaps that some of the more generally interesting answers which we give can from time to time be published in some newspaper to cultivate public sentiment in favor of the garden.

I was rather sorry that we could not discuss more fully the outline of a budget which I gave you. We were both tired from a long day when we finally came to it. You seemed to be somewhat disappointed that I had not allowed for more laborers, and, apparently, you should have preferred to leave out some of the other items which I had mentioned. Naturally, it is very difficult for me to work out a budget without having first a thorough understanding on the matter with you. I should have gone more into details on Monday night, but I could see that you were tired, and I was very tired myself.

My point is this : I do believe that for the first preparations 12 men are sufficient. It would not do to start right off with a big force. After a month or so we can, of course, take on more men by and by; for my sake as many as 100 or even more, if we can afford them. This, however, would not be a minimum force anymore for which you had asked. The minimum force with which we could make slow but steady progress would be 12 men.

One of the first men we shall need when we start is a propagator for whom we should cast about as soon as I get to Montréal. If you can employ me for January 1., or latest February 1., I would suggest to bring with me cuttings of several hundred varieties of plants and a great many seeds which we could start in the greenhouse. It would take me only 3 or 4 days to gather these cuttings, and they would give us one year's start over next winter. Besides, now I am here anyhow; next winter it would cost us a special trip. We shall have to do a great deal of propagating, especially during the first few years, so that a competent and efficient propagator is of the greatest importance. An incompetent propagator is a very serious handicap. The best man we can find is just barely good enough. Of course, I do hope that we can find a suitable man in Montreal, but, if we can not, we should not hesitate to get one from some other Canadian city. A gardeners society which, undoubtedly, you have also in Canada will, probably, be our best bet. French gardeners are frequently excellent propagators, and you need not fear that I might try to bring in Germans or Englishmen which might be poor policy. Of course, I prefer to be able to disregard nationality and to look only for efficiency, but in this case it might be wiser to give preference to a frenchman, if we ever possibly can.

Then we need an intelligent gardener who knows enough about plant names to be able to take charge of the labeling and record department. Such a man should not be difficult to find, since he need not have had previous

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experience in this particular kind of work and I can train him quickly, if he is only intelligent enough. This man need not be taken on, until the plants arrive from the Boyce Thompson Arboretum, which would be in April, and until that time we need hardly anybody else outside of the propagator whom I would suggest to employ as soon as possible. Until the ground opens up in the spring I shall be occupied mainly with the designing of the maps, and, of course, I do not need a stenographer, until there is enough work for one. <sup>be</sup> Undoubtedly, you realize that it will hardly be possible for me to finish all the maps for the whole garden within the time from Jan. 1. to April 1. I could design a park in that time but not a botanical garden. There are too many important details which have to be carefully considered, as that I could rush these designs so much. Besides, I shall want to make some investigations on the composition of the soil all over the garden, before I draw the final maps, and such investigations I can not make in the winter. However, I expect to be able to make a general map and to work out at least those of the details which we need for the construction work of the first summer. If you are in a particular hurry to get more of the maps done as quickly as possible, we could employ one or two draftsmen who could draw from my sketches. But I doubt that such an additional expense would be warranted. As soon as operations can be started in the garden, we need a foreman who should have had some experience in this kind of construction work, can read a map, and can handle men. Such a man should also not be difficult to find. Then we need a fireman to tend the furnace, a janitor, or perhaps a woman who comes every day for a few hours to keep the building clean, and probably a night watchman. To help the propagator in the nursery and greenhouses and to assist the foreman in the preparation of the ground etc. I suggested to employ for the start at least two trained gardeners. Perhaps, that for the first year we could get along with one, but two would be better. This is the skeleton staff. The other items are, of course, also open for discussion. The same holds true here as with the laborers. If we can get enough funds to employ a steam shovel and several tractors, we can proceed much faster, but we can make headway also with the expenditure for which I allowed. Certainly, it would be much better to have a budget of \$ 75000 as you suggested, but with \$ 50000 we could make a start. As to a seedexchange I could make a start with that right now. I received a supply of seeds of some rare and interesting shrubs which I intend to distribute to some of my most faithful correspondents abroad. In return I can get at least the seedexchangelists from Berlin, Munich and Copenhagen, perhaps also Paris, which outside of Kew, Edinburgh and Dublin are the best in Europe. We could get a great many seeds of interesting plants from these gardens. The English gardens I can not tempt with the seeds which I have now, but, I am sure, that by next fall I shall have some seeds which also they will be glad to get. Naturally, I do not like to ask anybody for seeds, until you are sure that you can start with your garden, so, please, let me know as soon as possible.

Very sincerely yours

*H. Tenner*