

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

Sept. 22. 1932

Dear Professor Victorin :

I received yesterday the new map which you sent me, and I am happy to say that I am very much pleased with it. I agree with this design in general principle which is all that is needed for the time being. The details in which my conception differs you will perceive readily by comparing my sketches with Mr. Kerouak's map. For instance, I believe that Mr. Kerouak still has too much road-surface in the foreground, and I rather dislike the right-angled paths around the building, but that is insignificant. It simply takes two, the builder and the planter, to make a satisfactory design of this kind; and Mr. Kerouak's design still shows too much the builder only. However that does not worry me any more. I know Mr. Kerouak now, I have full confidence in his ability as an architect - his design of the pavillon is very good -, and I believe that we would make an excellent team. We both can see the other's point of view and are both ready to learn from the other's special experience which is the spirit that leads to success. I am sure that the three of us would be able to make a real success of this Botanical Garden, if we could only get our hands on it.

I was very glad to read in your letter that you intend to plough up the nursery. That is a very good and important thing to do. If at all possible, get some horse manure, only a few loads, and have it spread thinly over the ground before it is ploughed. That would do wonders to the soil. After ploughing do not harrow but leave it in the rough over winter. The action of the frost will break up the sods better than any harrowing could. In the spring the nursery can be ploughed again and harrowed and will then be in perfect shape for use.

As to the leafmould I should advise you to proceed as follows. Have the men gather the leaves as soon as they are all down from the trees and have them take them to a suitable spot somewhere in the vicinity of the first greenhouse which is to be built. There they should stake out a square, about 6x9 or 7x10 ft. and on that base spread a layer of leaves about 1ft. thick. On this a thin layer of topsoil is spread, about 1cm or at the most 2cm. thick, and then the whole is tramped down as tight as it will go. Then comes again a layer of leaves about 1ft. thick, covered by a thin layer of topsoil, and again this is tramped down. This is continued, until the whole pile, which should taper slightly towards the top, is about 4ft. high. Then the whole pile should be covered with about 3in. of good soil. Top soil may be gained by skimming off the sod which covers the surface and using the soil immediately beneath. This soil should be as free from stones as possible, and, if it is very stony, it would be advisable to throw it through a screen. 3 or 4 such piles of leaves are

Tauscher, H. F. Marie-Victorin, B

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better than one, since you will want to have lots of leafmould on hand when you start to lay out your garden, and you can not possibly have too much, but, of course, one pile is better than nothing. This leafmould should be turned over three times next year: once in the spring, once in the summer, and once in the fall, after which you can start to use it. It will be at its best in 2-3 years from now, which explains why I suggest to get as much of it started now as you possibly can.

Another kind of soil which I should also advise you very strongly to prepare now, if you have any men that can be put to work on it, is sod-soil. This is prepared in the following manner: Sodds are cut out in squares, about the size of the blade of a spade or slightly larger, and about 2-3 in. thick, that is with as much soil on them as they will hold. Preferably these sodds, since they remove some of the most fertile soil, should be cut in places which are not to be used for planting later on. For instance, where the greenhouse is to be erected or from future roadbeds. The best soil is obtained from these sodds, if they can be set up together with manure, preferably cow-manure. But, if cow manure is not obtainable - not more than 3 or 4 cubic yards would be needed - or if horse manure can be had much cheaper and easier, take horse manure and proceed as follows: A suitable spot should be selected where the pile may remain for a few years without being in the way, and where it is conveniently near for use, that is in the next vicinity of the greenhouse or nursery. Again a square of about 7 * 10 ft. is staked out, and the first layer of sodds is laid out as close as they will go and with the tops up. The next layer on top of that is placed with the tops down and the roots up. Then comes a layer of manure not more than 1 inch thick. Then again a layer of sodds with the tops up, a layer of sodds with the tops down and the roots up, and again a layer of manure. So on until the pile is 5 or 6 ft. high, slightly tapering towards the top. A layer of sodds with the roots up closes the pile.

If you can not get any manure, or if the manure is too expensive, have some sodds set up without manure; or have at least one pile set up with manure and 2-3 without. This sodsoil is indispensable for the growing of plants in pots. It will cost you little to prepare it now, but it is very expensive, when you have to buy it. This sodsoil also will have to be turned over three times next year and will be ripe at the same time as the leafmould.

Now, please, do not think that I harp on these soils, because I overestimate their importance. Good soils are the basis of all success in plant growing, and you have no idea how many efficient gardeners fail with the cultivation of plants because their predecessors did not provide for suitable soil while it was time. You have to prepare these soils a long time in advance or find yourself without them when you need them. Besides, I understood from Mr. Kerouak that you have a few men on the place who do not have very much to do, but whom you hold so as not to increase the number of unemployed. Here is something of great importance which they can do now, which should be done anyhow, but for which time can hardly be spared in the spring in case you should by then be ready to start with the laying out of the garden.

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Even in case your whole Botanical Garden scheme should fall through yet, -which, of course, we all hope will not happen- the setting up of these soils will not be a lost motion. Any gardener in Montreal would be glad to buy these soils at a good price, if you find that you can not use it yourself.

Another thing which, I am sure, you will want to have in the spring ready for use - which means that it should be prepared now - is a cold frame or rather several cold frames, which you will need the more urgently, if you do not build a greenhouse now. For instance, if you do get in spring the 10000 plants from the Boyce Thompson Arboretum, which I certainly hope you will get, you will need for them at least a cold frame in which to keep them, until they can be planted out. Also for a first start with the propagation of plants from seeds and cuttings a cold frame is indispensable. The best type of cold frame, which eventually at least you will surely want to have, is made of concrete, but if you fear that that would be too expensive under the present circumstances, have at least one temporary wooden frame put up which will serve until it can be replaced by a more permanent structure. I shall be glad to supply you with detailed specifications for the building of a frame, if you care to consider this suggestion.

I do hope that you will carry out your intention to come to New York for a brief visit and that you will come real soon. It would be of such great importance for us to have a real talk now. Letters are dreadfully unsatisfactory. If possible, try to arrange to have the better part of one day or at least one whole afternoon free for me. I should like so much to take you out to the Boyce Thompson Arboretum where I could demonstrate to you many important points. I would show you there also the plants which I am trying so hard to persuade you to take. I know that if you have seen them once, you will not rest, until you have them in Montreal.

Very sincerely yours

H. Teuscher

H. Teuscher
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