

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

August 3. 1932

Dear Professor Victorin :

A few days ago I received your letter of July 28., and today came also the maps which I had been awaiting with much eagerness.

I have not looked the large map over very much as yet, but as to the map for the beautification of the grounds around the building I have to say that I am certainly glad to read in your letter that you call it "very provisional". Please, do not do this sort of thing, whatever you do. It will be regretted forever after. I do not want to say anything against the architect, but this is the design of a builder who is used to work with rule and compass and knows nothing about plants. 200 years ago official gardens used to be laid out in this fashion and, thanks heaven, they are gone. The first greenhouse which you build would, of course, have to be a propagating house, and, I believe, that it would be very unfortunate, if you would have to set it in a crazy angle in the middle of the landscape, only because that pleased the designers fancy who could not get out of the rut of angles in which he stepped because the building happens to be sitting across a corner. The first propagating house which should be built entirely along practical lines belongs into the nursery. Is it ~~not~~ possible to wait with building it, until I have been up there ?

I also notice that even in this small corner 5 entrances have been provided for. Do you really want to throw your garden as far open as that ? How little that is in the interest of the general public you can see here at the New York Botanical Garden where vandals ruin every thing because it is impossible to guard the garden.

I do hope that you will not misunderstand my criticism. You do not have to employ me, but, please, let me help you. Yours is the first botanical garden to be laid out after more than a generation. Yours is the chance to learn from all the mistakes of the others. Please, do not repeat them, let me help you. I do not believe, that I could bear it to see you miss the opportunity which you have got to lay out a botanical garden as perfect as it can be made with our present knowledge.

I noticed with interest that you say in your letter that for the sake of public opinion you will have to do some work in the garden this fall. But it is not quite clear to me whether you mean that you only will have to make a beginning in order to show that you are going ahead with the scheme or whether you consider it as desirable to start some kind of construction which would give employment to as large a number of unskilled laborers as possible. I realize, of course, that it is one of your strongest arguments that the development of the botanical garden will provide employment for a large number of people who are now without income. The most natural point on which to start a botanical garden, would be, of course, the nursery and the propagating-

21-  
T. S. M. Chen, H. & Marie-Victorin, B.



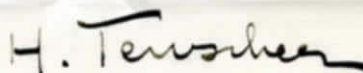
department, as I have pointed out before, but that can not exist alone and would necessitate the starting of the organization of the garden-staff.

From the fact that you mention terracing as a possible work that might be started this fall I conclude that you are rather concerned with the providing of employment, and I am sorry to say that I fear that to proceed with any terracing or other work of this kind without an actual scheme for the whole garden might lead into very serious mistakes. However, I consider it to be quite possible that we could reach rather quickly an agreement on at least a skeleton scheme for the whole garden and could work out within the allotted time of 2 or 3 weeks some of the details in such a manner that you could start with some construction this fall. Only, I would have to see your grounds and should talk everything over with you on the spot. From a distance I can ~~make~~ only make suggestions which we would have to discuss at length by letter, and it would take us certainly all winter to arrive at anything definite and all around satisfactory.

As soon as I have a few free hours I shall sketch a few possible solutions for the corner in front of the building. Of course, these can only be tentative, but the challenge of the architect's drawing is too great as that I could resist it. I wished I could meet this man as I feel confident that I could talk him out of his plan. I have always been very successful in dealing with old-fashioned, suspicious people of which type he undoubtedly is.

Please, let me hear from you as soon as you have a decision from the city authorities concerning my coming. I am now awaiting it more impatiently than ever.

Faithfully yours



H. Teuscher  
170 Truman Ave.  
Nepera Park, N.Y.

P.S. The powerhouse or heating plant in the main-axis of the building is also a very bad solution. But that comes from designing one corner without regard to the rest of the garden. The whole garden must be designed in one piece or mistakes are unavoidable. Do you realize what a grand vista you would and should have from the building over the whole width of the garden? But there is the powerhouse right in the middle of it, spoiling it for ever. I would locate the powerhouse to the east of the building, hiding it in greenery, and the conservatories in one large block somewhere southeast of the powerhouse perhaps about where one conservatory is located on the tentative map of the architect. The nursery would probably find its best and most convenient location on the present ~~northeast~~ boundary where it can be extended as soon as you get the rest of the land and where it would be in easy reach of every part of the grounds. However, I shall give this some more thought.