

Magnolia

Magnolia grandiflora
The Laurel Tree of Carolina
Catesby's *Natural History*, 1743

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On Reclaiming a Southern Antebellum Garden Heritage:

An Introduction to Pomaria Nurseries, 1840-1879

by James Kibler, Athens, Georgia

"Every garden is a volume of nature's poetry"

—William Summer, 1860

*I*n the November 1840 issue of the *Charleston Southern Cabinet of Agriculture and Horticulture*, an anonymous author noted



Pomaria Plantation House, built 1826-27, seat of Pomaria Nurseries.

that on a visit upstate to Newberry District, he met a gentleman who "has imported the choicest varieties of fruit trees" to his plantation. The traveler continued: "It is hoped that its reputation for good fruit will freely entitle it to its classical and appropriate name." ¹ That name was "Pomaria," a Latin coinage from the female adjectival form of "pomum," meaning "fruit," and echoing the name "Pomona," the Roman goddess of the orchard. With his brief announcement of 1840, our correspondent gives the first record of the founding of what was to become one of the South's largest and most influential nurseries in antebellum times, and as good a nursery as existed in America.²

When a traveler from Pennsylvania visited Pomaria Nurseries six years later, its proprietor reported that the visitor "came from the heart of the fruit region of the north" and said he had never seen

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Calendar

October 2nd-4th, 1993, Richmond, VA: Maymont Centennial Weekend. Please contact The Maymont Foundation, 1700 Hampton St., Richmond, VA 23220 for more information.

October 7th-9th, 1993, Winston-Salem, NC: "Many Peoples, Many Cultures: The Shaping of the Southern Landscape," the Ninth-Biennial Conference on Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes. All Southern Garden History Society members are being mailed brochures and registration materials. For further information, contact Mrs. Jackie Beck, Registrar, Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes, Old Salem,



Inc., P.O. Box F, Winston-Salem, NC 27108, Tel. (919) 721-7352, or FAX (919) 721-7335.

October 15th-16th, 1993, St. Francisville, LA: This year's Southern Garden Symposium will include several workshops, demonstrations, lectures and tours. Pre-registration is required. Contact The Southern Garden Symposium, P.O. Box 2075, St. Francisville, LA 70775 for more information.

May 6th-8th, 1994, Colonial Williamsburg, VA: Twelfth-Annual Meeting of the Southern Garden History Society.

Pomaria Nurseries

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"better specimens there, and of some specimens, he did not see them so fine."³ By 1861, Pomaria excelled not only in its original intention of providing fruit trees for Southern orchards, but also in its large and impressive "Ornamentals Department" that included both exotic and native plants, some of them extremely rare. One of its very strong offerings was roses, which its proprietor acknowledged as the glory of the garden — especially the repeat-blooming Mosses and Bourbons, Damask Perpetuals, Teas and Noisettes. Pomaria's 800 varieties of "New and Select" roses in 1860 comprised what was one of the largest and most sophisticated nursery collections of this plant ever assembled on the continent. By April 1849, Pomaria's roses "of every hue and color"⁴ had become celebrated; and by 1860, they drew visitors from throughout America.

The Nurseries' sphere of influence went beyond South Carolina, even in its early years. Orders from the extant Nursery Ledgers (1859-1863) note a wealth of customers in North Carolina, with an agent in Charlotte who did a good business. The Greenville, South Carolina agent served western North Carolina, including Flat Rock and Hendersonville, North Carolina; but the Nurseries had an Asheville agent as well. Pomaria also had agents in Augusta, Georgia; Mobile, Alabama; Fernandina, Florida; and New Orleans, Louisiana. Orders came from all these states, as well as Mississippi and Arkansas. There was a scattering of Northern patrons, including the

William R. Prince and Co. Nurseries of New York. Perhaps the best illustration of Pomaria's influence in the Deep South comes by way of a recollection passed on to me in 1978 by a Pomaria descendent:

In the summer of 1916, when I was teaching at Beth-Eden Institute in Winston County, Mississippi, a farmer drove up to the house where I was staying and asked for me. "I heard the teacher was a Miss Summer from South Carolina," said he. "Did you ever hear of the Pomaria Nurseries?" He smiled broadly when I explained that I was from Pomaria and William Summer was my great uncle. Then he gave me a big basket of delicious fruit, explaining that the trees which bore the fruit came from the Pomaria Nurseries about 1850. A number of families who came out to Mississippi from Newberry County brought young trees from Pomaria with them — the Kinards, Livingstones, Krumptons. "In fact," said he, "I think all the orchards and ornamental shrubs in this area came from Pomaria Nurseries."⁵

The evidence of the extant ledgers proves that there is at least some measure of truth in the gentleman's claim. Some of the heirloom roses turning up today as far away as Texas may have

had their origins at Pomaria.

Although the Nurseries were not founded until 1840, their proprietor, William Summer (1815-1878), had been collecting the best local fruit tree seedlings and testing imported ones on Southern soil since he was a young man in the mid-1830s. To A. J. Downing, Summer wrote in 1849 that he had "for fifteen years past [i.e., since 1834], amused myself with the introduction of many of the best fruits known to American Pomologists." In this activity, he was a Southern horticultural pioneer. "When I commenced," he wrote Downing, "there were but few choice fruits known in our State, and I was forced to throw myself on the veritable honesty of vendors of fruit trees. Upon testing many trees, I find that I have been frequently imposed on." Over the next decade, Summer tried to continue to produce a good product despite the Northern tree peddlars who often traded off Pomaria's reputation by selling trees under Pomaria's own name. Their lack of knowledge about proper nomenclature added to the confusion of "the same fruits under a half a dozen different names" which Summer was striving to clarify. Of his own pioneering endeavor, he wrote Downing in 1849 that he hoped through his experiences to be able to

point out many things for those who may follow me, whereby they may avoid difficulties under which I have labored. I hope to be able...to give you an account, from my own observations, of such Northern and European fruits as succeed well in the South, and in order to further the extension of fruit culture in our "sunny-land", take the liberty of introducing, through the medium of your journal, a few of my Seedlings, which I have tested, and for our region, am satisfied with. I may add, that I have so often been deceived by descriptions and praises of new fruits, that I am exceedingly loath to claim for my seedlings more than ordinary qualities – but so many of my experiments have turned out as abortive as the attempts of parsons to raise steady men out of their sons, that I think I will do no one ill in sending these, the choicest results, into the world of trees, with my name attached to them; so that if I am



mistaken in their excellence, the blame of their sponsorship may rest on me.⁶

Summer then forwarded Downing descriptions of his own Ferdinand, Fixlin and Aromatic Carolina apples, his Upper Crust pear, and Poinsett and Mrs. Poinsett peaches.

William's younger brother, Adam G. Summer (1818-1866), also aided him in this enterprise from his nearby plantation, Ravenscroft, where Pomaria Nurseries had "the majority of the trees" for nursery sale in 1852.⁷ Although both men were knowledgeable across the range of plants, William's expertise lay primarily in fruit trees, roses, chrysanthemums and dahlias, all of which were grown out at Pomaria Plantation; while Adam's tended toward native and exotic ornamental trees and shrubs for the landscape, planted largely at Ravenscroft. William admired the homely, domestic and practical, whereas Adam was a published poet and author of humorous stories. From family tradition, Adam is recalled as the "family extrovert," a lively and dashing "dandy" who nearly broke his father with fiddle dances, barbecues, valets, high fashion, fast horses and extravagance of every sort – "even jewelry, champagne, waistcoats, and beaver hats." He was much loved for "disinterested kindness and generosity" and admired as a real "character."⁸ Sober, serious and introspective William was always the sole "proprietor" of the establishment, but Adam must be given due credit. Although admitted to the bar in 1840, and a busy professional man during this decade, he was an important influence on the Nurseries throughout the next decade, until 1857, when he purchased land near Ocala, Florida and established his plantation, Enterprise, there. Adam's notes in his copy of *Mrs. Loudon's Gardening for Ladies* (New York: Putnam, 1843) reveal something of his interests. He jotted: "*Halesia tetraptera* grows on the streams in middle County [either Lexington or Newberry County] – flowers early April." "The plant pointed out to M. Lecouvery by Mr. M. McCord as a Dogwood – *Stuartia*." "Valparais plant to be had in Charleston S.C. – Edwarde."⁹ His interest here was obviously in procuring plants, and in the properties of the useful ornamentals native to Carolina. Both *Stewartia* and *Halesia tetraptera* were offered in Pomaria's catalogue of 1853.

As complementary personalities with complementary interests, the two brothers gave

the Nurseries a breadth and depth they may not have had otherwise. Adam's chief contribution to Pomaria came in the period 1852-1857, when ornamentals first became a major emphasis at the Nurseries, possibly through Adam's involvement. The decade of the

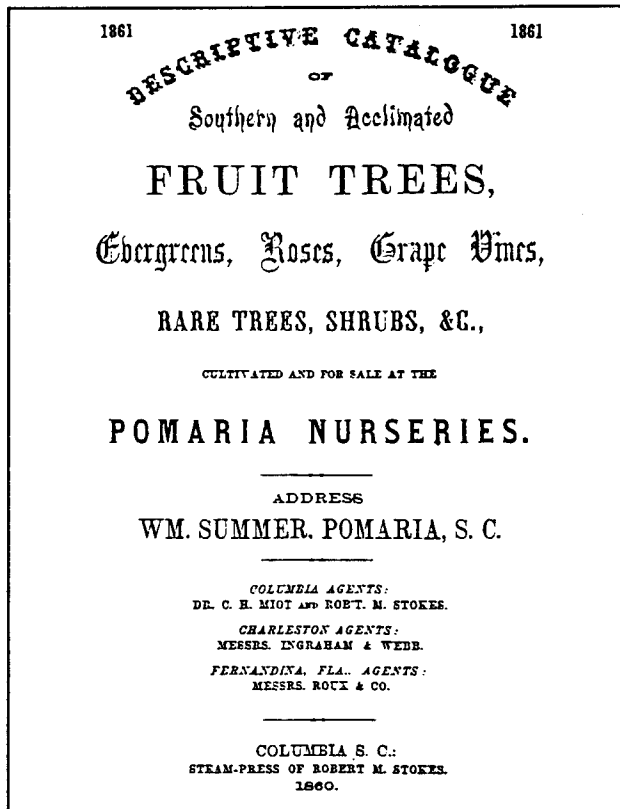


the native ornamentals, and felt them to be as significant as the exotics. William developed new varieties of fruit trees, tested their worth and made the best ones available. In this capacity, he created nine

significant new apples that became widely known throughout the South, and 24 other good ones; ten excellent peaches, and 34 of merit found locally and disseminated through the Nurseries; three very important pears; and two new plums. These were widely dispersed throughout the region, and some were grown in Europe. A.J. Downing and John J. Thomas acknowledged several as worthy.¹⁰ The Proceedings of the American Pomological Society during the 1870s and '80s tracked the popularity and westering progress of many of Pomaria's fruit trees into Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Arkansas. Both brothers often won prizes for new fruits at agricultural fairs in the region. For example, the *Southern Cultivator* of September 1856 noted that Col. A.G. Summer "exhibited 50 varieties of fruit at the inaugural meeting of the Pomological Society of Georgia in Athens," a collection that was deemed "very attractive." The hundreds of other varieties (either of his own or introduced varieties) that William tested and found unsuitable to the Southern climate or otherwise unworthy, he neither listed nor sold. The catalogues offered only a select gleaning from a much larger collection of plants. The Nurseries were thus providing, in essence, an early Southern experiment station for fruit trees, and William and Adam were well aware of their service to the South in this capacity.

In his preface to the 1860-1861 catalogue, William Summer thanked his "liberal customers, throughout the Southern States" for the generous patronage that had increased the Nurseries' sales "regularly, each year, in a most satisfactory manner." For fruit trees, he gave "a descriptive list of each variety as have been tested and found adapted to our climate." Again, later, he emphasized that he had selected the varieties of fruits "with great care" in the "constant endeavor to cultivate only such as are adapted to our climate." Summer continued:

In the Ornamental Department, the same care has been observed....It has been a constant desire to have in cultivation all the best varieties of Fruits, as well as Ornamental Evergreens, Trees, Shrubs, and Roses,



Title Sheet from Pomaria Nurseries' Catalogue, 1861.

1840s had been a busy one for him as a lawyer, newspaper editor, author and official Printer to the State; and with his return from Columbia to Ravenscroft in 1850, he served in the State House of Representatives (1850-1854). Still, the decade of the 1850s saw him more often at home and with an increased interest in agriculture, in introducing new methods of farming, agricultural implements, machines and livestock. Thus, until 1857 and his removal to Florida, he devoted more time to the Nurseries; but it was always divided with a range of other duties, from cotton planting to raising Cotswold Sheep, Essex and Chester Swine and North Devon Cattle.

The proprietors of Pomaria had a proper enlightened nurseryman's philosophy and put it into effective practice. They wanted the best exotic ornamentals and offered them only after testing in the Southern climate. They did not slight

which are suited to our climate, and to supply these of a thrifty growth and condition to my patrons. As I am "to the manor born," the proprietor trusts that persons about to plant will well give encouragement to their own Nursery at home before sending their patronage abroad.

He invited customers to come, see, learn and choose in person: "The Nursery is situated 1 1/2 miles south of Pomaria Depot, on the Greenville and Columbia Rail-Road; and, upon being previously advised by letter, I will always have a carriage awaiting the arrival of any visitors, and will entertain them in rural style at my house during their stay."¹¹ Graciousness and hospitality also softened the hard business edge of this enterprise in a most Southern way. Summer was making a good profit; but clearly a larger satisfaction came in providing a service in a genial, personal and enjoyable way.

To further his aim of service, William, like his brother Adam, helped found and support various agricultural societies, both local and regional, and edited two agricultural periodicals, *The Southern Agriculturist* (1853-1856, co-edited with Adam) and *The Farmer and Planter* (1859-1862, co-edited with Robert Stokes). Here, he published monthly talks with the reader on vegetable and flower gardening, and essays on such wide-ranging topics as the benefits and civilizing effects of gardening; "The Forest Trees of the South"; reforestation; soil conservation; terracing and trenching; sparing the songbirds around the farm; and beautification through planting of trees — all showing an enlightened, humane and strong environmental concern.¹² William Summer also contributed essays and managed the agricultural column in Adam's newspaper, the *Columbia South Carolinian* (1846-1847), Adam's journal, *South Carolina Agriculturist* (1856), and A.J. Downing's *Horticulturist*. Summer was in fact an agent in South Carolina for Downing's periodical in 1848. The second edition of Downing's *Fruits and Fruit-Trees of America* (1869) acknowledges his help and includes fruits of Summer's propagation.

As a leading horticulturist and pomologist, Summer was known and respected by more than Downing. His horticultural friends included Joel Poinsett, of *Poinsettia* fame, who sent him seeds from his far-flung travels to grow out and test; and



the naturalist John Bachman, who often visited Pomaria, entertained the Summer brothers in Charleston (where he introduced them to his botanist friends), and, according to family tradition, had brought John James

Audubon to Pomaria.¹³ Summer was acquainted also with the Rev. John Drayton of Magnolia Gardens fame, and William Henry Ravenel, who worked with Summer to promote viticulture. Ravenel, in fact, mentioned Pomaria's link to Van Houtte in 1861: "Mr. Summer of Pomaria...is in correspondence & exchange with Van Houtte of Ghent, Belgium, & English houses, & wants many of our native plants from here & asks me to aid him."¹⁴ Which "English houses" Ravenel is referring to is unknown, but his comment is extremely significant. We already know that Pomaria imported directly from France, and Ravenel adds England and Belgium to a growing list.

William Summer's life is as interesting and inspiring as his work. Physically handicapped from youth and often in great pain, he was unable to participate in the vigorous, youthful sporting activities of plantation life and instead took an interest in plants. They were indeed his friends, as he recalled in "The Character of a Pomologist," an essay in which he pays tribute both to the amateur pomologist who taught him his love of the art, and the art itself:

It seems that those who follow up nature, and who, by study, master her secrets, are listless to the vexed excitement of the business world, and by refinement of the temper, and gentleness of thought, become the best of men...The habits of the Pomologist are frugal — his thoughts elevating. His studies lead him to make discriminations in other things than the mere distinguishing of the different varieties under his care, and even his labor to recognize those under their true name and history, amidst the confusion of names and synonymns that prevail and perplex every man who attempts to make improvements in fruit growing, is beneficial; and he arises from his task, pleased with having rendered service....Followers spring up like his own trees, and partaking of his zeal and intelligence, the young sprouts

become themselves skilled in cultivation and distinguishing different fruits and examining nicely their peculiar qualities and habits of growth. This is the reward of the honest-hearted Pomologist – he lives not altogether for himself, but for those who surround him, and those who are to follow after him in the ever-moving march of life. Political strife never reaches his subjects – they are safe from proscription, and he is happy. The wickedness of the world does not entangle his footsteps, for his loved trees, from flower-bud to fruit, teach him lessons of virtuous innocence. He reads and stores his mind from the interesting and instructive living pages of nature's beautiful book, and looking up to "nature's God," is ever ready to depart when he may be called to the final home.

We, too, have lived long enough to have our followers, and it will be the gilding pride of our declining years, if they should entertain for us the same grateful feelings which cause us to honor and love the true-hearted man who imparted to us a taste which has relieved the monotony of what would have proved an unbearable existence.¹⁵

This excerpt is typical of a Summer essay: deeply felt, personal, honest and engaging. He was a prolific and exuberant garden writer and a philosopher of gardening. In the latter capacity, consider this excerpt from his "Beneficial Effects of Flower Culture":

From the humblest cottage enclosure to the most extensive pleasure grounds, nothing more conspicuously bespeaks the good taste of the possessor, than a well cultivated flower garden....Flowers are, of all embellishments, the most beautiful...The love of them commences with infancy, remains the delight of youth, increases with our years, and becomes the quiet amusement of our declining days. The infant can no sooner walk than its first employment is to plant a flower in the



earth, removing it ten times an hour to where the sun seems to shine most favorable. The school boy, in the care of his little plot of ground, is relieved of his studies and loses the anxious thoughts of a home he may have left. In manhood, our attention is generally demanded by more active duties, or more imperious, and perhaps less innocent occupations; but as age obliges us to retire from public life, the love of flowers and the charms and delights of a garden return to soothe the latter period of life.

To most persons, gardening affords delight as an easy and agreeable occupation...but to the close observer of nature, and the botanist, beauties are unfolded, and wonders displayed that cannot be detected by the careless attention bestowed upon them by the multitude. In their growth, from the first tender shoots which rise from the earth through all the changes which they undergo, to the period of their utmost perfection, he beholds the wonderful works of creative power: he views the bud as it swells, and looks into the expanded blossom, delights in its rich tints, and fragrant smell, but above all, he feels a charm in contemplating movements and regulations, before which all the combined ingenuity of man dwindles into nothingness.¹⁶

"Gnothi sautor," the ancient Greeks carved at Delphi: "The beginning of wisdom is for finite and flawed man to know his place before the Creator." Summer says here that the thoughtful gardener is taught this wisdom. He is properly humbled before the awesome design. Gardening is thus allied to the religious, and elevated to the highest plane of human experience. Summer may prove to be one of the better nature writers of his day.

As he had said in his preface to his 1860 catalogue, he was "to the manor born," the great grandson of an early pioneer of this community settled by German and Swiss in the mid-1700s. The land on which Pomaria Nurseries was established was granted to his family by King George III. Summer was thus plantation bred and

raised in its traditions on the land of his ancestors; and he died there in 1878. Unlike his brothers Adam and Thomas, he did not travel widely, but stayed close to home.

The Nursery buildings were burned and the Nurseries pillaged and largely destroyed in February 1865 by Sherman's Left Wing and Judson Kilpatrick's Cavalry. The Nurseries' Columbia branch, established in 1861 as a new center for its Ornamentals Department and a public arboretum of specimen plants, was completely destroyed.¹⁷ Both brother Henry's Crossroads and Adam's Ravenscroft plantations were burned to their foundations. The house at Pomaria was pillaged and set on fire several times, but the fires were extinguished by the family. Summer reckoned the value of his losses at the Columbia branch alone to be over \$114,000. His losses also included lands for a public garden that he was in the process of creating for the city. In 1861, Summer described the project as covering "some thirty acres...the front is now being laid out in the Natural, or Modern English Landscape Style, and will contain specimens of all the rarest and finest Conifers and other Ornamental Evergreens, Deciduous Trees, and Flowering Shrubs, Roses, Herbaceous Plants, etc.... A range of glass houses, 22 by 200 feet, has been erected in a line beyond this, for the cultivation of all the choicest and rarest Exotics.... All the newest and most desirable species of latest introduction have been ordered from the first establishments in Europe, a Catalogue of which will be published early in 1862."¹⁸ No copy of this important list has yet surfaced, and nothing remains of the arboretum. The purchase ledgers of the Columbia branch have survived, and from them we can compile an impressive list of greenhouse and bedding plants – sold in great quantity even in the midst of the War Between the States.

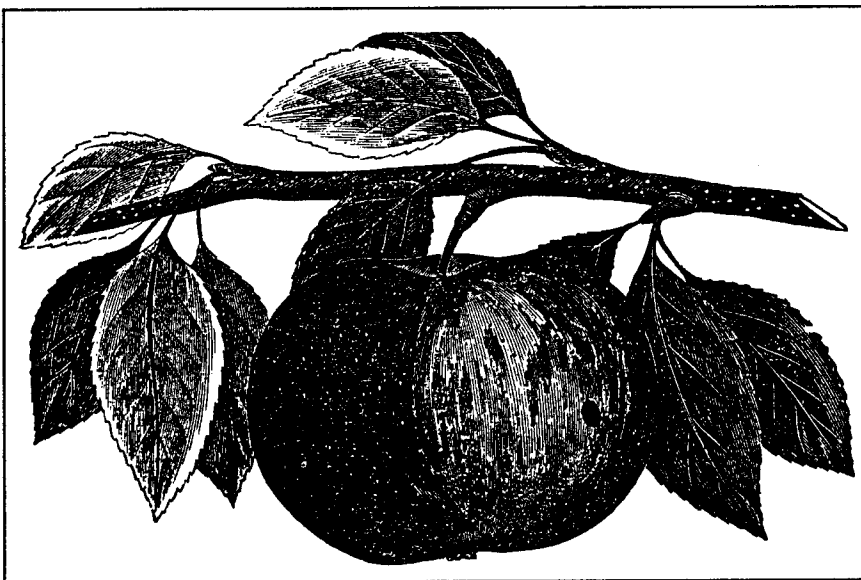
At the end of the conflict, on Summer's account books were \$25,000 in uncollected debts, which he felt he could not press for, considering the desperate situation of his customers in Carolina. "The people are not able to pay," he wrote in 1867; "and knowing their condition, I cannot ask them for money, although I need it as bad as



anyone."¹⁹ A large number of his customers were in the direct line of Sherman's march from the sea "from Beaufort to Yorkville," as Summer put it and had been served in the way of his own family with burning and looting by the over 50,000 soldiers in their midst.

After the war he carried on valiantly and slowly revived the Nurseries. By 1867, he reported the nursery business as "growing." He was "farming half my lands with about twelve freedmen and one white man...to work with them." From the fall of 1866 into 1867, he took the position of "assistant assessor" for taxes in Newberry. "The pay is \$6 per day," he wrote to a friend, "and it will help me get up again."²⁰

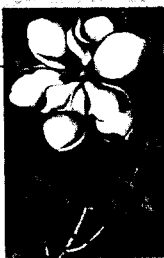
Even during these hard years of distraction from his Nurseries, he produced what was one of his greatest gifts to pomology: the Hebe Pear. This won the highest prize of the State Agricultural Society in the year 1871. It is listed in André Leroy's *Dictionnaire Pomologie* and is called "the greatest of his class of fruits." A. J. Downing's 1872 edition of *Fruits* described the fruit as buttery and sprightly, and the tree thrifty and productive. In 1872, Summer published, rather miraculously, a sixty-one page catalogue of offerings, down from the 108-page catalogue of 1861-62. By this time, he had again established his business, and without the aid of Adam, who had died in 1866. He continued his work for six years until his own death from pneumonia in 1878. The catalogue of 1878, a diminished 52 pages, was the last, although the Nurseries continued at least into 1879



Pomaria Nurseries's Garden Royal Apple. An illustration from The Southern Agriculturist.

under the guidance of William's nephew, John Adam Summer.²¹ It was William's hope that the Nurseries would continue, but circumstances, particularly those occasioned by war, doomed the Nurseries to extinction. His old customers of the plantation past, who "now had to pay their high taxes and feed their children a day at a time could no longer buy plants," here where "a bought rose is the deepest of luxuries."

The Nurseries' flush years were the period 1860-1862. From the 10,000 apple trees of 150 "varieties of rare excellence" advertised in the *Southern Agriculturist* of 1 January 1855,²² Summer progressed (as described in 1860) to



"(s)pecimen orchards, now numbering thousands of trees, including 500 varieties of Apples, 800 of Pears, over 300 of Peaches, 100 of Plums, 70 of Cherries, 15 of Apricots [the catalogue of 1860 actually lists 22], and the same of Nectarines [21 in the catalogue]." Summer noted that, in addition to these, he had procured "many hundred varieties of the Pear," which he was in the process of testing for their suitability to the Southern climate. He continued:

...The late Northern varieties of the Apple prove early autumn kinds [in the South] and to supply this defect, the best native Southern kinds have been procured...I have now added to my list

To get an idea of the relative size and merit of Pomaria's operations, it is helpful to make comparison to a known, respected nursery of the day. We are fortunate to have for comparison the 1860 catalogue of both Pomaria Nurseries and the famous P.J. Berckmans' Fruitland Nursery of Augusta, Georgia, one of only two Southern nurseries of the period mentioned in the standard history of American horticulture to 1860 by U.P. Hedrick. Here is how their two catalogues compare that year:

List of Fruit Trees Offered For Sale in 1860

	Fruitland	Pomaria
Apple varieties	205	333 [growing at Pomaria in 1860: 600 varieties total; 300 Southern seedlings]
Pears	252	365 [800 varieties growing]
Peaches	112	207 [600 varieties growing]
Cherries	28	51 [70 varieties growing]
Plums	31	99
Nectarines	17	21
Apricots	15	22
Figs	7	16
Pomegranates	2	6
Medlars	0	2
Quince	4	10
Jujube	1	1
Mulberry	4	4
Service	1	1
Nut trees	4	11
Grapes	112	21 [minimum 100 growing at Pomaria]
Berries and roots	5	0
Strawberries	37	16

List of Ornamentals Offered For Sale in 1860

Trees and Shrubs	215	311
Climbers and Vines	16	38
Roses	315	406 [Listing is for Ever-bloomings; 800 varieties growing in 1860]
Miscellaneous	13	19
Dahlias	1[one generic listing]	163
Chrysanthemums	1[one generic listing]	62
Grasses	0	2

**TOTAL VARIETIES OFFERED
FOR SALE IN 1860:**

878

1,186

of Peaches choice Southern kinds, which keep up a good succession, from the ripening of the earliest until frost....The Pear, either as a standard or as dwarfs, is well adapted to our climate; and I can, with the greatest confidence, recommend the culture of this delicious and wholesome fruit....The Cherry succeeds best in all locations with us, when grown upon Mahaleb stock.

As the specialist in ornamentals, Adam Summer had most of this stock at his own Ravenscroft Plantation south of Pomaria. No known description of this branch exists except for a kinsman's noting of nursery stock of arborvitae and *Cryptomeria* growing there in rows. These, as the kinsman related, were choices for cemeteries in the antebellum era; and Summer often advertised his service of suggesting appropriate plants for the ornamentation of graves.²⁴

In the 1850s, Ravenscroft had an European gardener, James Crammond, whose specialty was ornamentals, particularly the rose. Crammond was so influential in the rose department during the period of 1852-56 that a separate *Catalogue of New and Select Roses* bore the names of Crammond and Adam Summer as co-proprietors. In this capacity, Crammond wrote many articles on rose culture and ornamental trees and shrubs in the Summer's agricultural periodicals. At least two other European gardeners and horticulturalists follow Crammond at Pomaria: W.R. Bergholz and Mr. DeHines, a German-speaking Frenchman who came in 1863, and was "the last."²⁵ Bergholz also wrote articles on gardens in Columbia, rose culture, ornamentals and landscape design; and he managed a monthly garden column in William's *Farmer and Planter* in 1861. Unfortunately, little else is known of the contribution of these three men.

One must take into consideration that both Pomaria Nurseries and P.J. Berckmans' Fruitland Nursery no doubt had more plants for sale than their catalogues listed. (See sidebar page 8.) Certainly Pomaria did, for Summer noted in his preface of 1860: "In Fruit, Shrubbery, and Flower stock, I always have on hand rare novelties, not embraced in my Catalogue; and from these such selections will be made" if given the authority to do so. Indeed, actual customer orders from October 1859 to March 1863 reveal an array of plants never officially listed for sale in his catalogues, plants that otherwise would not have been known to be at Pomaria.



From the Pomaria and Fruitland catalogues themselves, we see the ornamentals at Pomaria to be 1,002, compared to 597 at Fruitland. The rose varieties number 406 at Pomaria, compared to 315 at Fruitland. In Fruit Trees, Pomaria listed 1,138 varieties to 679 at Fruitland. Although Fruitland was to grow rapidly in the next years and surpass Pomaria, there can be no question which nursery had the more extensive offerings in 1860.

Such a general introduction as this cannot hope to supply the tremendous amount of material significant to the history of gardens, gardening and horticulture. The Pomaria archive (including ledgers, catalogues, letters and the wealth of essays in various agricultural periodicals by William and Adam Summer and their gardeners) stands to alter, and in some cases completely rewrite, Southern garden history of the antebellum era. For example, the Pomaria Order Ledgers will provide a very important listing of plants that were actually purchased in the period from October 1859 to March 1863. That hundreds of specific gardeners and gardens throughout the South are named in the orders provides invaluable documentation for plantings in these particular gardens. I know of the existence of no other such documentation in the country. Beyond those gardens that are named, we can now tally the number of plants ordered from the Nurseries and deduce a general "popularity" chart of favorite ornamentals from this particular nursery on the eve of the War Between the States. What a valuable resource for historic garden restoration and re-creation!

A cursory look reveals a gardening sophistication that previously had been undocumentable. We find Pomaria offering, for example, *Torreya taxifolia*, *Stewartia marylandica* [*malachodendron*], *Chionanthus virginica*, *Halesia tetraptera*, *Taxodium sempervirens* [California yew or redwood], *Cupressus lambertiana* [California cypress], *Thuja plicata* [Western red cedar], *Thuja occidentalis* [American arbor vitae], Kentucky coffee tree, native azaleas "in all the hues of the rainbow," red buckeye, sweet shrub, devil's walking stick, Eastern hemlock – all in 1853 – and on the same pages as tea olive, true olive, loquat, Deodar cedar (described by Bergholz in 1861 as "well known" in South Carolina gardens "for its grandeur"), cedar of Lebanon, chili pine (monkey puzzle tree), Brazil pine (probably *Araucaria*

angustifolia), Norway spruce, Minorcan box tree, strawberry tree, *Buddleia*, African tamarisk, *Aucuba japonica* "gold dust," *Ilex latifolia*, *Viburnum tinus*, Italian cypress and *Cryptomeria japonica*.

Cryptomeria was thus offered for sale at Pomaria and sold to Southern gardeners long before the books on American gardening have it introduced to this country.²⁶ (Donald Wyman's *Trees for American Gardens* gives 1861 as its American introduction date.) Pomaria's European gardener, James Crammond, noted in the *Southern Agriculturist* of October 1853: "The Japan cedar (*Cryptomeria japonica*) is another splendid and rapid growing tree, recently introduced from China; it grows from 3 to 5 feet in a season; form pyramidal and handsome; color brownish green."²⁷ By 1861, Bergholz was calling it "the prince of evergreens."²⁸ Crammond's mention of its Chinese origins may give us a clue to how Pomaria received it. William Summer was a close friend of the famous plant explorer, Joel R. Poinsett, who himself had travelled throughout Asia. It is known that Poinsett had sent many seeds for trial at Pomaria, including "Chinese Wheat." And the 1853 catalogue abounds in Asian plants: *Arborvitae*, Chinese yew (*Podocarpus*), *Gardenia fortunei* ("new...from China"), *Magnolia fuscata* (banana shrub... "Fragrant Dwarf Chinese"), *Nandina*, *Cupressus torulosa* (Himalayan cypress), *Thuja pendula* (weeping arborvitae), Chinese juniper, *Juniperus excelsa* (tall juniper, from the Himalayas), Chinese sand pear, *Koelreuteria paniculata* (golden rain tree), *Pittosporum tobira*, Chinese white *Magnolia conspicua* and *Magnolia purpurea*. One of the most interesting of the Chinese listings is *Cupressus funebris*. It was not introduced into Britain until 1850, yet was already being offered for sale at Pomaria in the catalogue of 1853. Summer's friendship with Poinsett might prove fruitful in explaining why Pomaria had such rare and unusual exotics, especially from the Orient. Pomaria's rose and camellia importation directly from France, as well as contacts and plant exchanges with various European nurseries, and a series of European gardeners, might also provide clues.

Summer's 1853 catalogue had listed the *Cryptomeria* for sale; and his preface to his 1857 catalogue noted further that the tree has "proven to be a most valuable and desirable Evergreen" and has shown itself to be acclimated to the



South. It and the deodar cedar are singled out as deserving a place in the Southern garden. By 1860, as his catalogue of that year reports, Summer had grown, tested, and was selling three varieties of

Cryptomeria: (1) Japan cedar, "a tree of very distinct habits from Japan; it delights in rich soil, is of pyramidal form, with large slender drooping branches; growth from 30-50 feet"; (2)

Cryptomeria viridis – green cedar. "The habit of this species is more dwarf, and the branches more densely set with foliage of a new dark green color"; (3) *Cryptomeria pendula* – weeping cedar. "Elegant and remarkably graceful, foliage bright green." At least three old *Cryptomeria* specimens are to be found in the antebellum gardens of Pomaria's Upcountry South Carolina customers; and two are present at the Summer family cemetery at Pomaria itself. In this way, Pomaria may write some rather large footnotes to American garden and horticultural history.

Pomaria's lists and careful descriptions of roses alone merit monograph treatment. His categories grouped for sale, as well as the descriptions of his own rose gardens as being "in the greatest perfection" in October, both tell us Summer recommended "Ever-bloomings" for his Southern patrons. His hundreds of offerings were in these groups: (1) Damask Perpetuals; (2) Hybrid Perpetuals; (3) Bourbon Ever-blooming; (4) Tea ("Sweet-scented and Ever-blooming"); (5) Ever-blooming Chinas; (5) Noisettes; (6) Perpetual Mosses; and (7) Moss, Garden and Banksea Roses ("blooming in spring"). The proportion of six "Ever-blooming" categories to one "Spring-blooming" clearly shows his enlightened philosophy of tailoring rose growing to the possibilities of the Southern climate – a wisdom to which we have only recently returned.²⁹

The lengthy descriptions of the fruit varieties as to color, shape, size, fragrance, texture, place of origin, and time of fruiting, by one who knew these plants so well, are just as valuable as Summer's detailed descriptions of the rose, and again, like them, deserve a monograph-length study. Both works should help the scholar identify and reclaim lost varieties. The historical plant list from which to choose in re-creating period gardens of the late antebellum period stands to be greatly enlarged and enriched, thus resulting in the potential for period antebellum garden restorations to be themselves richer and more sophisticated in plant variety. Especially in

Upcountry South Carolina, where Summer had so many patrons, the accurate period garden of, say, 1859, might very well include a *Cryptomeria*, a plant that should be denied period gardens in other regions. (Between October 1859 and March 1863, Pomaria sold 43 *Cryptomeria* to 34 Carolina patrons.) The plant possibilities for the Southern garden had been much the richer and more sophisticated owing to Pomaria; and as a result of our reclaiming a knowledge of what it contributed, the period antebellum garden restoration in the South



might become as well. All these are very exciting prospects to pursue in the coming years ✦

Notes

The epigraph is from *Farmer and Planter* (July 1860): 220.

1. *Southern Cabinet*, ed. J. D. Legaré, Vol. 2 (November 1840), 717.

2. The Pomaria catalogue of 1878 corroborates the founding date of 1840 by stating on its cover, "Established in 1840."

3. Letter of William Summer to G. A. Fike. 11

A visitor to Pomaria who described Summer's hospitality, also gave the best contemporary description of the Nurseries in 1860, one that corroborates and expands its proprietor's own modest and conservative account:

The soil is gravelly, and was rather poor, but dry, and is made rich by deep trenching, and heavy dressings of peat, compost, and manure. The Nurseries contain about 35 acres – all are brim-full with trees and plants....Among his 500 propagated varieties of apples, are at least 300 kinds [of] Southern seedlings. Among others, is ready to ship out, next winter, the new South Carolina Seedling Apple, which took the first premium at our last State Fair as the best Southern winter apple, which has been named "Susannah," in honor to the lady that raised it....the 400 trees, which only could be propagated last winter, are already half engaged...it took the prize contending against 22 North Carolina varieties.

Among his Pears are 2 new South Carolina seedlings. "Upper Crust," an early variety...and "Dr. Bachman," called so to honor our old worthy friend, Rev. Dr. John Bachman, is one of the very best of Pears, ripening about the end of August, with a rich vinous flavor. Mr. S. has about 600 varieties, propagated through Pear and Angers Quince stocks....His 400 propagated varieties [of peaches] embraces the very best sort yet tested, from the very earliest to the latest. Many of them, and very good sorts too, are natives of the Palmetto State. The Nectarines, Apricots, Plums and Cherries are all handsome, fine, strong, and healthy "stuff," in the nurserymen's phrase; and Chestnuts, English Walnuts, and Pecan nuts are propagated in such a large quantity, that most every husband in this state, who wants, has a chance to get some to plant and raise some nuts for his children to crack during Christmas time

Mr. S. has also very largely grown the Herbemont Everbearing Mulberry, which he says is far superior to Downing's Everbearing...It is the greatest food for hogs...and plenty of poultry also....How many thousand Grape-vines Mr. S. has ready for sale, we do not undertake to say, but no more than the population of our State ought to want. – There are large squares of all the principal old tested native varieties, grown from layers or cuttings;...the new varieties, such as Delaware, Diana, Concord, Anna, Hartford Prolific, To-Kalon, Union Village, Rebecca, and others, are all plentiful on hand. He has also propagated in open air a fine selection of the principal and best foreign kinds.

The Ornamental Department...is unrivalled, and the largest and best in the South, and shows of Mr. S.'s good judgment and fine taste....it would require the whole space of your paper to give a full description of the various evergreen and deciduous trees and shrubs.

He has also the largest and finest selection of the much admired Roses and Dahlias I have ever seen. His 300 varieties of Dahlia we found all in full bloom; all shapes and shades of color are united in them... His Rose Department numbers nearly 800 varieties, which, with exception of the very newest kinds, are all propagated by cuttings; and his budded plants have already made heads strong enough to throw up all the sap which the root furnishes, and there will be no danger that they will sucker much...²³

Our correspondent went to Pomaria "in search of fruit trees" that October, and "we found what we wanted." He further noted Summer's "standard Orchards" as containing "nearly 800 varieties of Pears, 600 of Peaches, and 600 of Apples." These were apart from the Nursery collection.

September 1846. South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, hereinafter cited as SCL.

4. Description by William Summer in a letter to Fike, 12 April 1849, SCL.

5. Letter of Rosalyn Summer Sease to J. E. Kibler, 9 October 1978.

6. *Horticulturist*, 4 (December 1849): 275.

7. As stated by William Summer in a letter to L. Jones of Columbia, S. C., 11 December 1852.

8. As remembered by Rosalyn Summer Sease in a letter to J.E. Kibler, 13 February, 1979. An obituary by O.B. Mayer says roughly the same.

9. This copy is in the collection of the author.

10. John J. Thomas, *The American Fruit Culturist* (New York, 1867); A. J. Downing, *The Fruits and Fruit-Trees of America* (New York: 1858), 114, and (New York, 1872), Vol. 1, 79, 175 and Vol 2, 623 and 870. Also in J. A. Warder, *American Pomology* (New York, 1867), 533.

11. "A Visit to Pomaria Nurseries," *Farmer and Planter* (November 1840): 346-347.

12. I am currently preparing for publication *The Farmer and Planter's Southern Garden Calendar*, 1859-1861, a compilation and conflation of Summer's monthly essays.

13. Letter of Rosalyn Summer Sease to J. E. Kibler, 13 February 1979.

14. Ravenel's unpublished journal, 24 April 1861, SCL.

15. *Farmer and Planter* (April 1860): 122.

16. "Beneficial Effects of Flower Culture," *Farmer and Planter* (May 1860): 154.

17. William Summer to G. A. Fike, 8 April 1867. In a letter to Holloway, 23 February 1867, he says that after taxes, "(e)verybody is almost already bankrupt." Berley Papers, SCL.

18. Preface to the catalogue dated 1861.

19. Letter of William Summer to G. A. Fike, 8 April 1867, Berley Papers, SCL.



20. Ibid.

21. John Adam Summer advertised the Nurseries in the *Newberry Herald* (16 January, 1879).

22. Here, Summer also mentions an 1854-1855 catalogue "available upon request." This catalogue has not yet surfaced.

23. *Farmer and Planter* (November 1860): 346-347.

24. Reported by O. B. Mayer. See *Fireside Tales*, 153.

25. Letter of Rosalyn Summer Sease to J.E. Kibler, 12 October, 1878.

26. U. P. Hedrick, *A History of Horticulture in America to 1860* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), 283. Hedrick states that "compared with the North, the South had few large nurseries before the Civil War. Only two were outstanding...Richmond Nurseries...and Berckmans' Nursery."

27. See the first notice of Pomaria Nurseries in Linda Askey Weathers, "Digging into Gardens Past," *Southern Accents* (September-October 1992): 88, 90, 92, 94, 96.

28. *Farmer and Planter* (April 1861): 127. Robert Nelson, writing from Macon, Georgia, in April 1856, said of the *Cryptomeria* that it was "introduced into England...in 1846, by Robert Fortune. It boasts of a very rapid growth, and has here, on sandy soil, grown as much as 5 feet in a single season. It is perfectly adapted to our Southern climate." He describes his own "specimen tree, about 18 feet high" that in "severe winters, turns perfectly brown in January and February,...bears plenty of seed, and strikes well from cutting." *Southern Cultivator*, XIV (1856): 158-159. Andrew Gray, writing in December of 1854, described the country residence of J. Stoddard, near Savannah, as having *Cryptomeria japonica* "planted out here for several years...which seem to stand well, and...will be a very handsome tree." *Horticulture*, XXI (February 1855): 82.

29. *Farmer and Planter* (April 1861): 127.

Of Interest

The Historical Gardener is a quarterly newsletter for gardeners at historic sites, museums and living history farms. The magazine provides practical information for those desirous of recreating not only *what*, but *how* our ancestors planted and cultivated in their gardens. A one year subscription is \$12. Those interested in such topics may correspond with the quarterly's editor, Kathleen McClelland, 2910 West Michigan Avenue #111, Midland, TX 79701, Tel. (915) 699-7951.

Former SGHS president **Harriet Jansma**, who has agreed to serve as book review editor for *Magnolia*, has recently contacted 100 academic and commercial publishing houses to request review copies of books about Southern garden history and related subjects. Review copies of any book appropriate for review on these pages may be submitted by any member or publisher. Members interested in writing reviews are encouraged to send Harriet their areas of interest and expertise. Her address is: 900 Lighton Trail, Fayetteville, AR 72701 ♦

Roses of Natchez

by Susan Haltom, Mississippi

Although it would appear that the perfection of beauty had already been attained in the lovely roses produced and disseminated during the last ten years, there is still, each season, something new and striking brought out; and yet there are many old favorites, which have been prized and cultivated for years, that stand altogether unsurpassed.

– Thomas Affleck, Southern Rural Almanac, 1858

This past May, rosarians from Vancouver to Florida convened in Natchez, Mississippi, for the seventh-annual meeting of The Heritage Rose Foundation, a group dedicated to the collection and preservation of roses with historic, educational or genetic value.

Many folks associate Natchez with azaleas and Spanish moss, but antebellum Natchez had a different look. Chinaberries (grown in a city nursery to encourage the public to plant), wax myrtle, deutzia, sweet olive, weigelia, mock orange, double flowering peach, spireas and the ubiquitous privet all contributed to the sense of place. But above all, Natchez was known for its roses.

In the decades immediately preceding the Civil War, Natchez was called the “Persia of Roses....In no other part of the union have we seen them attain such perfection and beauty.” (U.P. Hedrick, *A History of Horticulture in*



America). Andrew Brown’s rose garden at Magnolia Vale was a scheduled stop for steamboat passengers on the Mississippi River. Haller Nutt planted over nine acres of roses at Longwood, his stylish octagonal villa. Cloth of Gold, Devoniensis, *Rosa odorata* and the monthly rose festooned mansion, Federal townhouse and rough country dogtrot alike.

The man who supplied denizens of Natchez with roses was Thomas Affleck (see *Magnolia*, Summer 1991). Though he advertised 162 roses in his catalog of 1851, many are unrecognizable to today’s gardener. Some of Affleck’s roses survived his nursery’s move to Texas and are perpetuated by The Antique Rose Emporium.

Surviving roses interest historians and rosarians, for as Charles Walker, President of The Heritage Rose Foundation, stated, “You can never eliminate the possibility that an isolated rose is an unnamed seedling or the last rose of that type on



The Carpenter women at Dunleith. Henry C. Norman.

earth.” Tough roses also interest gardeners who seek low-maintenance landscape plants.

SGHS Board member Glenn Haltom prepared a walking tour map of Natchez with roses marked for observation, and many folks took the opportunity to stroll and get a feel for the town.

Lectures were given on "Decorated Yards of African Americans in the South" by Richard Westmacott; "Roses of Borough House in South Carolina" by SGHS members Ruth Knopf and Liz Druitt; and "Thomas Affleck's Roses" by SGHS member Susan Haltom.



gardens.

The Natchez City Cemetery, situated on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi River, is renowned as a repository for old garden roses. Heritage Rose Foundation members "mapped" the cemetery by dividing into

groups and accurately recording the location and identity of old roses. (The "find" of the weekend was a tea rose tentatively identified as Spice and formerly seen in Bermuda.)

Cemetery roses included Safrano, Archduke Charles, Louis Philippe, Old Blush, Duchesse de Brabant and Mrs. B. R. Cant – all tough, hardy roses that thrive on a windy hill with little or no care from a gardener's hand. Someone called them "delectable neglectables."

The conference ended with the planting of nine historic roses at the cemetery and the hope that Natchez will



Tours of historic gardens focused on those with old garden roses or with past history of rose

once again be known for its roses +

The Plant Reporter: Pink Roman Hyacinths Revisited

By Flora Ann Bynum, Winston-Salem, NC

It is time for an update on the saga of Roman Hyacinths (*Hyacinthus orientalis albulus*). My last *Magnolia* article on them was Spring, 1991, following articles of Winter, 1991 and Summer, 1990. In these I related how pink and white Roman hyacinths have almost disappeared throughout the South, although many people remember them in older gardens until fairly recently. The double pink remains elusive, although Victorian bulb catalogues

listed it. Blue Roman Hyacinths are still very common in Southern gardens.

We thought we had found the rare double pink. In March, 1991, Florence Griffin and Bill Welch spotted and obtained bulbs from an older woman who had gotten them from her grandmother. We were sure we had the old double pink Roman hyacinth. However, I took a stalk in bloom to the 1992 SGHS annual meeting in Charleston, South Carolina, and Bill Hunt said immediately, "That's not a Roman hyacinth, but one of the old double Dutch or garden hyacinths."

All of my consultants now agree it is an old cultivar of a Dutch or garden hyacinth. I sent snapshots to Dr. Arthur Tucker in Dover, Delaware, and to Scott Kunst, in Ann Arbor, Michigan, both antique-bulb authorities, and both said it was difficult to make an accurate identification from a

picture. Hopefully I shall soon have enough bulbs to send them to grow.

Celia Jones of Sisters' Bulb Farms in Louisiana told me at the April 1993 SGHS meeting in Texas, "You must call Cleo Barnwell in Shreveport; she knows about some double pink Roman hyacinths." In early May I called Cleo who related that about fifteen years ago she and her husband and a close friend drove from Shreveport into the White River area of Arkansas to look for wild flowers. In a little town at the base of Mount Nebo they spotted numerous pink Roman hyacinths blooming in a yard. They stopped and visited with the woman who owned the garden. She was very cordial and said, "Oh, I'll be glad to give you some." Cleo took her name and later wrote to her. She sent Cleo a "whole bunch" of the bulbs which Cleo shared with several friends. On that same trip, they also saw the double pink growing in two or three other yards in the little town.

Cleo said these hyacinths are quite distinctive, a very pale soft pink with two layers of flower petals, and can easily be spotted from the road. The foliage is the same as that of the blue Roman hyacinth, and they are not at all like the double Dutch or garden hyacinth. She has now lost hers, but her close friend still has a very few of the double pink and the single pink. Unfortunately, Cleo did not record the name of the woman in Arkansas, her original source. She has been plant hunting in every section of Louisiana and

Mississippi and this one little town is the only place she has seen the double pink Roman hyacinths.

Now with Cleo's account, we have four recollections of the double pink – the account of Julia Maud Conrad, who lived near Winston-

Salem and brought bulbs to her own place from the the old Conrad farm in the 1920s but



eventually lost them; the flowers I remember brought years ago by farm women to our Farmer's Market here; an account given in Elizabeth Lawrence's

Gardens in Winter (1961) of these hyacinths on an old homeplace in Louisiana; and now Cleo's account.

Cleo feels the pink and white Roman hyacinths take much more care than the blue and perhaps this is why they have not persisted the way the blue have, which will live for years in the same location with no care.

I have now grown for three blooming seasons Roman hyacinths from two commercial sources and they do not resemble the Roman hyacinths of Southern gardens. Others report the same experience with commercial bulbs.

Recently a friend brought a small clump of the white Roman hyacinth from her homeplace near here, my first. Celia Jones has obtained one pink and two white Roman hyacinths from an abandoned homeplace in Louisiana.

For three years I have advertised for pink or white Roman hyacinths in the "North Carolina Agricultural Review" with no results. So the search for pink Roman hyacinths – especially the double – goes on ♦



In Print

James L. Reveal's *Gentle Conquest* is a new look at the botanical exploration of North America. Recently issued by Starwood Publishing, Inc. (Washington, D.C.), it includes many full-color illustrations from the Library of Congress' vast collection of early botanical publications.

Patrick Taylor's *Period Gardens: New Life for Historic Landscapes*, which chronicles the restoration of 12 projects in Great Britain and the United States, was published by Thames & Hudson ♦

Members in the News

SGHS Board Member **Dr. William C. Welch** has received the prestigious "Member at Large" award from The Garden Club of America, an honor bestowed to talented and dedicated individuals who have made significant contributions to conservation, horticulture and education. Only two selections are made each year; Frank Cabot being the second for 1993. Bill was recognized at the GCA's National Convention in Chicago this past May for his work in training volunteers (including Master Gardeners, nursery professionals and garden club members), his programs for resource efficient landscapes and his special interest in exploring and interpreting our southern gardening heritage through his books and lectures.

Deadline for submission of articles for the Winter Issue of Magnolia is November 1st.



Once again, **Richard Westmacott** has been cited in the news, this time in a lengthy article by Ann Raver for the Sunday *New York Times* of August 8th. His groundbreaking study, published last year in *African-American Gardens and Yards in the Rural South* (University of Tennessee Press), has received national acclaim. Both Richard and Bill Welch will be a part of the upcoming "Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes" conference in Winston-Salem this October (see *Calendar*).

MacMillian has recently published **Peter Loewer's *The Evening Garden***, the first book ever devoted to the garden in late afternoon and at night. Illustrated by the author in black and white, the book covers hundreds of plants that either bloom at night or are night-fragrant, and includes a chapter on the all-white garden. The hardbound book sells for \$25.00 +

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