

ticulture. It may be growing flowers, bedding plants, azaleas, trees, or landscaping, grounds maintenance, garden centers, etc. These people are most willing, usually have the capital and land, but the lack of knowledge. It seems more time and effort are being given to these requests than to existing nurserymen.

Horticulture education has not fallen short of the mark. The desire and tremendous interest for horticultural education have developed faster than the educational processes can provide the education.

### **HORTICULTURAL EDUCATION — DOES IT FALL SHORT OF THE MARK?**

GARY LONG

*University of Missouri  
Columbia, Missouri*

Four months ago when I agreed to be on this panel it seemed like a rather simple task; after all I have been involved in education in some way or other for most of my life. During the past 4 years of working with commercial nurserymen I have developed some insight into the problems nurserymen face in trying to hire qualified personnel. After 4 months of research and thinking about the subject, I wonder how I could have been so naive about the problems of education in general and horticultural education in particular.

One of the first things that I concluded from this study is that the problems of horticultural education cannot be separated from the problems of education in general. College professors complain that many of the students are coming to college unprepared for college level work. Secondary school teachers have similar complaints. Many of the problems seem to go back to primary school and beyond.

Teachers at all levels reported problems of discipline and increased difficulty of motivating students to want to learn. Part of this can be blamed on our affluent life style, part on our economic system in which in the majority of homes both parents work and thus have much less time to spend with their children and certainly the influence of television has to be mentioned.

There seems to be a great deal of uncertainty among educators at all levels. Many of the educational innovations that were designed to enrich the student, improve his learning ability and foster creativity are now being questioned. We now see what seems to be the start of a trend back to more emphasis on the basic reading, writing and arithmetic that were considered old fashioned a few years ago.

A reluctance of educators to fail students seems to be a trend at all levels of our educational system. Although some very good reasons can be cited for doing this, most agree that it has resulted in a general lowering of standards. Grade inflation is a popular term among educators today. This makes it difficult to compare the grade averages of today's students with those of a few years ago.

The most unique feature of horticultural education is the tremendous growth it has undergone in the past few years. Many new programs have been developed and student numbers in traditional programs have virtually exploded. Horticulture is now being taught in many high schools in our state. These programs vary from single courses to full time vocational training programs. Vocational technical schools offer training in this field for high school graduates and full 4 year programs are available at most of our state colleges and universities. Special training programs are also available in our state prison system, mental hospitals, and vocational rehabilitation programs.

Many different approaches to horticultural education are being tried in these programs. Unfortunately, most of these programs are too new for us to evaluate their success. Certainly the number of graduates being produced by all of these programs is much greater than can be absorbed into our commercial horticulture businesses. It is interesting to speculate on the impact these graduates might have on the future of this industry.

In looking at these different programs one thing that becomes apparent is the absence of coordination between programs. Very little communication takes place between different programs and most of this is on a personal rather than official basis.

Many of the problems encountered in our University programs are a result of the tremendous increase in student numbers. Most of these new students have no prior experience in the field. *Horticultural programs in the past were designed to handle relatively small numbers of students most of which had some background in commercial horticulture.*

Most horticulture professors agree that many of our present programs are not adequate to handle the numbers or type of students now majoring in horticulture. Many University programs are undergoing serious review and I think it is safe to say that we will be seeing some significant changes in the future. However, I should point out that in researching this subject I did read some of the *material that has been written on the subject.* Many of the problems that educators are facing today and many of the complaints that are leveled at our educational system are virtually the same as they were 25, 50 and in some cases 75 years ago. So don't expect to see all of the problems solved very quickly.