

scaping services. Their interest and cooperation can result in more money loaned for real estate purchases and improvements and higher commissions for real estate brokers. It can also result in expanded sales of nursery products and landscape services as well as increased satisfaction for home sellers and buyers. The general public will also be affected as it will benefit from higher property values and a decrease in slum areas.

The opening of channels of communication between nurserymen and home financing and marketing groups is necessary in order to achieve coordination of their common interests. The participation of leaders of each industry

at state association meetings of the other groups offers a possibility for delineating the common interests of the various parties. Similarly, programs for local meetings in individual cities might be dedicated to presentations relative to their common interests by persons in other industries. Nursery groups may find it helpful to develop literature pertaining to local markets on the care and maintenance of ornamental plants and place them in appropriate display devices in savings and loan associations and real estate offices. Other avenues of mutual cooperation can most likely be developed after channels of communication are opened.

THE WINTER SWEET, *ACOKANTHERA SPECTABILIS*, A FINE ORNAMENTAL FOR SOUTH FLORIDA

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Acokanthera spectabilis is a fine ornamental for the warmer parts of Florida that has been with us for a long time, yet has remained unused because of mistaken identity. It grows wild in Africa from Mossel Bay along the east coast to Natal, Swaziland, and the warmer parts of Transvaal.

Acokantheras comprise five species, all native to Africa. They are members of the Apocynaceae, or Dogbane family, containing some 1000 species, chiefly tropical trees, herbs, shrubs and vines, most of which have a milky juice and small, five-petaled flowers. Other members of this family that are frequently found in Florida gardens are Oleander, Allamanda, Vinca or Periwinkle, *Trachelospermum* or Confederate Jasmine, and Plumeria or Frangipani. Present-day taxonomists include *Acokanthera* with the genus *Carissa* so that the plant under discussion today will be known in the future as *Carissa spectabilis*. The late Marcel Pichon who published his monograph on this family in 1948 spells out that years ago the species with thorns were classified as *Carissas*, and those without as *Acokantheras*; in spite of the fact that some *Carissas* in the wild are spineless. Other species of *Acokanthera* are *A. longiflora*, a 20 foot Kenya shrub; *A. schimperi*, a dense 20 foot East African tree; *A. frieso-*

rum; and *A. venenata*, a slow growing shrub of Natal.

It is this last one that has the issue clouded. Back in the early days of nursery history, the founders of Florida's oldest and best known nursery, the Reasoner Brothers of Manatee, brought into Florida more different plants than anyone else except the Bureau of Seed and Plant Introduction. Introduced from Natal in East Africa were seeds of the well known *Asparagus* "Fern," *Asparagus sprengeri*, *Asparagus falcatus*, *Carissa arduina* (now *C. bispinosa*) and *Acokanthera venenosa*. This plant, described in books as the Bushman's Poison, source of the potent arrow-poison, was then placed in the Reasoner collection of economic plants and not propagated because of its toxicity. The late Norman Reasoner realized its beauty and planted a specimen at his Bradenton home that eventually grew 8 feet tall. It was here a few years ago that its true identity was discovered when matched with specimens in the Smithsonian Institute as the Winter Sweet, *Acokanthera spectabilis*. The two were not too dissimilar in appearance, and expert opinions, particularly then in Africa, were often far from correct.

The Winter Sweet is a well foliated shrub that has a maximum height when unpruned of eight to ten feet by five to six feet in breadth. The opposite oval leaves are of good size, four to six inches long and one to two inches broad. They are quite leathery, when mature dark green, though often a purplish hue in winter. New

growth is wine colored. It is this thick, leathery foliage that is so well adapted to withstand the vicious attacks of salt, sand, and wind in our seaside plantings. It withstands these onslaughts better than its first cousin, *Carissa grandiflora*. In beach planting, its foliage seems happier when minor elements are applied.

Late winter or early spring is blooming time. The flowers are borne in dense clusters in the axils of the leaves. Often there will be two feet of flower clusters on a single branch. These clusters will be made up of many long tubed white flowers, often tinged pink, that are a half inch across, and with a delightful jasmine-like scent. The flowering lasts about three weeks. The shrub is perfectly beautiful at this time, and this accounts for its common name, Winter Sweet.

Now the fruits take shape and color—light green, then pink, dull red, then finally purplish black, about the size of an olive and usually containing a single seed. These remain on the plant a long time—often eight months—and add to the plant's attractiveness. The fruits are described in a few books as poisonous, but the majority of African authors describe them as edible, and relished by elephants. The fact that all other *Carissa* fruits are edible is a factor to consider. The author of this paper found them disagreeable to the taste and doubts that they might be eaten in error, and at the time of writing has suffered no ill effects.

The shrub is at its best when grown in the sun on well-drained soil of good fertility. Regular feedings of a well-balanced fertilizer four times a year will produce more rapid growth than the rather slow growth noticed with indifferent care. Leaves will be larger and less trough-shaped, and the plant will be better foliated. Blooming will be more profuse and last longer. Present indications are that the plant becomes more lush when kept well mulched.

The Winter Sweet has not been bothered with insects of any consequence. Young succulent growth in one or two rare cases has had a few holes by some chewing insect; otherwise, none. This is a distinct advantage.

Because of the late winter blooming habit, any pruning should be to shape the plant before the embryo flower buds have formed. This date should be before October first. An annual pruning should keep the shrub compact and well shaped.

This shrub is being planted in southern California in ever increasing amounts, and estimates are that one hundred thousand will be planted this year. Florida growers will soon find gardeners demanding this plant that tolerates sun, salt, sand, wind, blooms beautifully, smells lovely, and grows almost anywhere. It can be used in the foreground, background, foundation, or as a free standing specimen. Here is Florida's plant of tomorrow.

IMPROPER DIAGNOSIS OF LAWN PROBLEMS

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Increased immigration of northern residents into the concentrated areas of Florida are presenting problems that the County Agent has not been confronted with before. One of these problems which is directly related to urban living is the diagnosing of lawn problems. Almost every building, commercial or otherwise, is either surrounded by grass or has at least small areas of grass to maintain.

The complexity of selection of Florida turf-grasses is at all times confusing to the new resident. He has been accustomed to a one or two grass system in the north. Not only is the type

of grass unfamiliar to the new resident, but the soil and climate are entirely different than what he has been used to.

Unfortunately many new residents of three or four months have become self-appointed experts in the field of lawn problems. This situation is not becoming better, but is intensifying itself in increasing problems. Where can correct information be obtained? Probably the most reliable source of information for a local area can be obtained from the County Agricultural Office. Most of the urban areas now have a specialist in ornamentals and turf problems.

Proper diagnosing of lawn problems requires a considerable amount of logic as well as technical training. Diagnosing lawn problems, therefore, becomes a task for someone who is well trained and well informed in the turf field.

How does one adequately determine the prob-