MARYLAND HORTICULTURE

At the turn of the century, Baltimore, Maryland was the canning center of the nation. Vegetables from the Delmarva Peninsula and seafood from the Chesapeake Bay were brought by boat and train to the canneries located along the wharf. Now pollution problems and congested city conditions have all but closed the Baltimore canneries and trucks have taken over transportation. Yet acres of vegetables of the Peninsula continue to produce thousands of tons for the near-at-hand markets of the East Coast and for processors located at strategic points in production areas.

Maryland has been called “America in Miniature,” with seashores, piedmont and mountains, having a frost-free season ranging from 100-220 days, all in a rather small state. The “Eastern Shore,” that part of the state east of the Chesapeake Bay, has a long growing season, an average rainfall of 45 inches readily supplemented by irrigation from an underground water supply and sandy loam soils responsive to fertilization. Here the sweet potato and other truck crops, from asparagus to zucchini, thrive.

Most of the fruit production, apples, peaches, cherries and plums, is in the mountain and piedmont sections of the state, which are part of the Appalachian fruit belt.

Greenhouse production is centered primarily around the cities, especially north and east of Baltimore. The nursery industry is scattered throughout the state although the large wholesale producers are on the Eastern Shore where they have the advantages of the milder climate and an opportunity to grow a wide range of ornamental plants. One-third of the nation’s strawberry plants and nearly all of the essentially virus-free strawberry plants are produced on the Eastern Shore.

The horticultural industries in Maryland are responding to the increased urbanization of the state. An increasing volume of vegetables, fruits and ornamental crops is being sold from roadside markets to the thousands of motorists travelling to the mountains, to the historic spots, or to the ocean. The “pick-your-own” production of fruits, vegetables and Christmas trees is growing in popularity and supplying an income to the smaller producer.

Perhaps the most rapidly expanding area concerns the involvement of horticulture in man’s environment – the use of plants in the betterment of living from the window box in the apartment complex to land use – planning for new cities.

John C. Bouwkamp (left) and Leland Scott (right) with ‘Redmar’ sweetpotato (released in 1971) and ‘Goldmar’, its yellow-skinned mutant (released in 1972).

‘Dorchester’ – new tomato variety released by the Maryland Agricultural Experiment Station. This variety is especially well adapted for mechanical harvesting and whole pack processing.

‘Redskin’ peaches – since its release Maryland Agricultural Experiment Station in 1942 this variety has gained in popularity until today it has largely replaced ‘Elberta’ in the East and the Midwest.

Hydrangeas for the Easter market in the greenhouses of a Maryland hydrangea specialist.

Research and teaching facilities for floricultural, ornamental, and vegetable crops. Outdoor facilities are devoted to research in mineral nutrition and winter survival of container grown woody ornamental plants while greenhouse facilities are being used for breeding, mineral nutrition and growth regulator studies on floricultural and vegetable crops.