

# ABOUT OUR COVER

## TEXAS HORTICULTURE

To appreciate the existing variation to horticulture in Texas, you need to realize the state has an area of more than 168,000,000 acres which are divided into 14 land resource areas based on soil types, topography, climate, and vegetation. The states annual rainfall varies from 58 to 8 inches East to West with frost free areas varying from 30 to 180 days South to North. The total horticultural economic farm value in 1973 was about \$326,571,000 of which 69% was attributed to vegetables, 18% to fruits and nuts, and 13% to ornamentals.

Parts of East Texas have an annual rainfall of 55 inches. Timber products are vital assets where towering loblolly and shortleaf pine cover much of the land and large oaks and other hardwoods abound but vegetable, fruit and ornamental crops are also important. Tyler, considered by many as the capital of East Texas, is the rose capital of the world; its nurseries send out millions of improved plants. In the spring hundreds of acres of roses bloom and giant magnolia and blossom-covered azaleas make East Texas a floral paradise.

As you travel south through Houston and on to the Coastal Plain bordering the Gulf of Mexico, the landscape literally comes alive with wild flowers. The Highway Department encourages wild flowers, and Texas is said to have the greatest variety in the nation. The most famous are the bluebonnet and Indian paintbrush. Further south, in Corpus Christi, ornamentals flourish year around. The coastal area also contains a small but important vegetable acreage.

South of Corpus Christi, you pass through the famous King Ranch country, largely pastureland with large herds of native deer and imported exotic animals. These have become adapted and numbers are increasing. Once through the Rio Grande Plain you suddenly enter the Lower Rio Grande Valley where continuous fields of vegetables and citrus groves can be seen from highways lined with towering palms. The annual rainfall here is 35 inches and the Valley has a frost-free period of 330 days. Of the 250,000 acres of vegetables in Texas, close to 80,000 acres of 35 different vegetables are grown here as well as nearly all of the 90,000 acres of Texas citrus, home of the famous 'Ruby Red' grapefruit, the ultimate in quality.

The Wintergarden area of Texas, about 200 miles northwest of the Valley, has 35,000 acres of vegetables.



1. Dr. Creighton Miller, Junior, research leader for potatoes in West Texas, observes breeding lines planted in one of the commercial fields. About 25,000 acres of potatoes are planted in Texas with 15,000 in West Texas.
2. East Texas is known for its beautiful roses. Shown is one of many fields grown near Tyler, the rose capital of the world.
3. The pickling cucumber, onion, carrot and southern pea breeding programs are based at College Station. Dr. Leonard Pike looks over one of some 1200 onion breeding cages.
4. South Texas is the major production area for horticultural crops. Paul Leeper is the research leader for tomatoes and points out how one of his new breeding lines sets fruit under the high temperatures of the Lower Rio Grande Valley.
5. The Winter Garden area of Texas is ideal for a great number of horticultural crops and ranks second only to the Lower Valley of South Texas. Dr. Homer Blackhurst proudly shows the fruiting character of one of his Southern pea breeding lines developed for machine harvesting.

The main crops are watermelons, spinach, onions, carrots, cabbage, and other cucurbits. Another area near the Wintergarden, South of San Antonio produces vegetables and has a large nursery industry.

Another important horticultural area, the Trans-Pecos, produces the high quality 'Pecos' cantaloupes and mild-sweet Texas onions. A considerable acreage of pecans is raised in this general area. Annual rainfall in the western part is only 8 inches.

In Northwest Texas, the High Plains is the third most important vegetable area of the state. Some 34,000 acres of vegetables are grown there with potatoes, onions, carrots, cabbage and lettuce the major crops.

The road back towards East Texas leads through the Metropolitan area of Dallas-Fort Worth. There is much ornamental horticulture and a fantastic interest in urban beautification.

Relations between researchers in horticulture, the industries, and the people of the state are excellent and the recent organization of the Texas State

Horticultural Society should improve this relationship. Horticultural research and extension efforts are centered on the main campus of Texas A&M University at College Station but horticulturists are located on three large research and extension centers and several smaller research stations located throughout the state. Breeding programs have been productive with such contributions as the 'Brazos' blackberry; 'Texas Early Grano' and 'Granex' onion, the 'Chico' and 'Saladette' tomato; 'Perlita' cantaloupe and 'Ruby Red' grapefruit. The new 'TAMU Tripe Cross' pickling cucumber (cover photograph) the first three-way hybrid cucumber, is a high yielding hybrid adapted to mechanical harvesting. (Refer *HortScience* 9(1):83. 1974)

Horticultural growth in Texas has been steady but shows sign of rapid future expansion.

Leonard M. Pike  
Horticulture  
Texas A&M Univ.  
College Station, Texas