

Greenhouse Restoration (cont.)

posed matching funds with the State to come up with the early estimates of \$500,000 needed for the restoration. The legislature agreed, only to leave the Foundation to raise another \$288,000 when early estimates proved to be too low.

Carol Nelson, design architect from Preservation Partnership, set to writing the specifications. Her primary goal was to re-create the Camellia House in all its aspects so it would look exactly the same and retain its historic and aesthetic appeal. Early plans to remove the wood and steel, sand blast and return the steel, and then rebuild the wood were rejected. The House was to be torn down to its framework, the original steel rebuilt or replaced to the tune of \$100,000 and the wooden section replaced with aluminum. The aluminum was not only lower in price than custom wood, it would be more durable and require less maintenance. The goals were met: the House would be restored, keep its historic configuration, and renovated with modern metal.

The original Camellia House had been designed to be particularly tall to achieve the necessary air movement and high humidity the camellias required. Replacing the trusses necessitated construction of a plywood platform, designed by the general contractor, Walsh Construction of Floral Park, which doubled as a protective cover for the plants. Being 80 years old, the camellias could not be dug from the ground without chance of loss or damage, so all work went on working around the plants left in place. Construction started in April 1982. Since most of the glass had to be removed, and although original plans called for a fall completion date, it was well into winter before the work was done. Fortunately, the weather was mild until mid-December and the plywood platform in effect closed the plants off to the weather. The camellias weren't as magnificent their first spring as usual for the darkness and activity around them, but one would expect that. They are alive and well to carry on the tradition of the oldest collection of its kind on the East Coast.

Attention was paid to detail throughout renovation. For example, the architect wanted to reuse the wooden gutters, which proved impossible as they were too rotted. They were remade of aluminum, creating the right atmosphere and adding the "perfect" finish to the job. Lord & Burnham replaced the entire roof and the ground glass to be just as the original was designed. One change from the original is that the glass on the south side of the house is frosted while the north side glass is clear. This creates a better environment for the plants and lowers maintenance as no shading needs to be applied.

Historic gardens and horticultural collections have usually fared far worse than historic mansions, which can stand much longer periods of neglect and abuse. We all have the Coe family and Planting Fields Arboretum to thank for caring for this remarkable collection and to now make its further preservation possible. It is a fitting symbol and tribute to a great family who should be thought of as contributors to beauty and appreciation of that beauty and not as industrial robber barons. The golden age of Planting Fields will live on thanks to today's society that realizes the value of preserving the past for the appreciation of the present and education of the future. On February 4, the House was reopened and dedicated to the memory of Mai Rogers Coe. The Arboretum's next hurdle is the restoration of the main greenhouse, a visitors' favorite.

MIMULUS

Mimulus is a crop with which most people are unfamiliar. It is tolerant to low temperatures, responsive to B-9, dwarf-hybrid, low-growing, can be grown in packs, pots, beds and hanging baskets. It requires long days (13 hour days or longer) to flower.

In California first bloom occurred in 52 days from seeding while as few as 42 days were required in the U.K.

There are nearly 600,000 seed per ounce so one must be careful when sowing the seed. Germination only takes two to five days at 75°F. It is generally suggested the seedlings be pricked out into the final container about one to two weeks after sowing.

CULTURAL INFORMATION

Sowing Date: Mimulus require a 13-hour day to initiate flowers, so there is no point in sowing in the autumn or early winter. Sow three to four weeks before 13-hour days commence in your location for maximum efficiency. In the U.K. sowing in late February and early March should give flowering plants in April. Later sowings will take about six to seven weeks to flower.

Seed Sowing: Mimulus seed is small. Broadcast thinly onto the surface of moist compost and cover lightly. Germinate at 15° to 20°C (59° to 68°F).

Pricking Out: Prick out direct into the final containers, using a low nutrient compost, and keep moist. Mimulus are ideal for growing in cell packs, open trays or as pot plants in 9-cm (3½-in.) pots.

Growing On: Keep plants moist and cool. Frost protection 2°C (36°F) is all that is required at night to produce top quality plants. Higher temperatures progressively lead to soft growth and longer internodes. When it is not possible to provide consistently low temperatures, the use of a growth regulator is advisable.

Growth Regulator: Excellent results have been achieved with both B-9 and cycocel. Cycocel is preferable, however, as it also advances flowering slightly and darkens and hardens the foliage. Spray to runoff at 600 ppm. A single application only is needed and this is best applied at the four-leaf stage. *L. I. Horticulture News*

Christmas tree.

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