

GREEN SURVIVAL: TAKING THE STORY TO AMERICA¹

by Robert F. Lederer

I want to talk to you this morning on a subject about which you are the expert and I am the novice. And that subject is Green Survival. You are experts at it because through the International Society of Arboriculture, you have spent more than 50 years looking out for the interest of plants and promoting their use. You have shown where research assistance is needed and you have gone out and done something about it. And now, the nursery industry following the lead of your 3200 members has put a name on our total effort. We call it Green Survival.

Green Survival has opened many doors, many minds, I might even say many hearts. The nursery industry is honored to have been asked to kick off this 53rd annual convention of the International Society of Arboriculture. Our goal as an industry is to put more and better products in the hands of people. Yours is the same. Thanks to your great dedication and thanks to those whom I represent, the growers, retail, landscape and mailorder firms, we find ourselves with a joint mission.

We believe in nature's gifts of green, growing things. We believe so firmly that we want to share them with everyone. And like so many people who firmly believe in a cause, we often find ourselves wondering why everybody doesn't see the need. Why everybody doesn't automatically understand what we are saying.

Perhaps, if we stop to think about it for a moment, we will find that it is the language we are using. Not that it is mysterious, but that there is too much of it, too many Latin names, too many directions for planting, and composting, and pruning, and watering, and lifting, and spraying, and mulching, cuttings, and canes, liners, balled and burlapped, bare root, container mix, pesticides, layering, tuber and corm, heaving and

heading, guying and grubbing. The list goes on and on. And, when you come right down to it, except for the devotee it can become downright overpowering.

My home in Virginia includes a beautiful grove of trees. In fact, I am over blessed with shade. Several years ago, I saw a wonderful ad, the impact of which was that I could have color in my shade and the picture proved it. I wrote a check and in due course, received in the mail a little box containing six of the most miserable looking bulbs I have ever seen. Also enclosed was a set of directions. I have ordered these every year since, but I have yet to read all the way through those directions. All I wanted was color in my woods. What I got was some ugly little bulbs and a lecture on planting them in soil equivalent to that used to grow African violets, and even how to lift them in the fall. I looked up the word lift, so I know what that means.

Despite not following the directions, I have been fairly successful in having color in the woods. Successful enough to reorder every year. But, I have always had a guilty feeling that I am not doing it the way I have been told to. Last fall, I even got out there and tried to lift and ended up finding one of six bulbs, which for some reason was all shriveled up this spring when I wanted to use it, and getting the dickens from my wife for the mess I made in digging around looking.

What I am saying is that I think we need two sets of standards. I think it is necessary to have directions on how to use plants, but I think we have to keep in mind that the vast majority of people never have and never really want to be too deeply exposed to the hobby of gardening. But that should not exclude them from the wonders of plants. Let's not turn them off by insisting they know how. Let's turn them on by teaching them why. Why they should use green, growing

¹ Presented at the ISA convention in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in August of 1977.

plants.

What a different place our world would be if each person would plant trees to purify the air and trap dust, help create "greenbelts" to fight smog, plant green sound barriers to abate noise, install shrubs and ground covers to stop erosion and help clean our rivers, plant shade trees to conserve air conditioning energy in the summer, windbreaks to save precious heating fuel in winter, and join with others to create micro-environments to feed the spirit of man.

All this can happen. With small steps each person can take to, protect, and improve our life support system. Air, earth, water, sight, sound, energy, even peace of mind, all depend in one way or another on the green, growing trees and shrubs and grass and plants which are nature's gifts. And the steps each of us can take in using these gifts are coming to be known by the name: Green Survival.

You may not know the origin of that term which we use to describe our environmental action program. It was born out of the need so evident in the United States for a vehicle by which one person could help to improve the environment. A need which was dramatically demonstrated at one of the earliest environmental rallies held in this country. You may remember 'Earth Day' back in 1970 in Washington, D.C. It attracted more than 100,000 people. But the next day a headline in one city newspaper seemed, at that moment, to summarize the Earth Day effort. In big, black letters it read: *So What?!* One hundred thousand people came to Washington, listened to and made speeches, littered freely, and went home. *So What?*

The day that headline appeared the Green Survival program was conceived. The American Association of Nurserymen (AAN) knew it had found a way to allow one person, all by himself, to make a contribution to the improvement of our environment. A way to tap all that obvious energy. That way was to be Green Survival.

Simply stated, Green Survival is this: A series of small steps each of us can take to improve the quality of our lives. For example, if we are concerned about the quality of air, we should know that the leaves of trees and plants catch dust and

pollution from the air and hold them until the rain washes them back into the earth. The noise pollution that is literally making us sick can be muffled by the wise planting of green, growing sound barriers, another expression of Green Survival.

Energy conservation is on everyone's mind these days. Wind barriers of trees and other plant materials can save anywhere from 10 to 40% on winter fuel bills. Shade trees and vines can cool a home by as much as 8 degrees in summer. That's Green Survival too! The list goes on and on, plantings to prevent erosion on steep banks, as sight barriers, to purify the air, as growing investments, for mental stability.

We had a good message that has gotten better over the years, but how to pass it on to help individuals know how to take positive environmental action has always been the problem. Seven years later, we find the term becoming known and its message understood despite the fact that no real promotion money has been put behind it. Why? Because Green Survival makes sense.

One major facet of the program began in Raleigh, North Carolina, when one member decided he was going to tell this whole city about Green Survival. He discussed it with influential members of the city council and the mayor. The idea caught fire. The people who were interested in cleaning up the streams banded together with those who wanted to create bike trails. They were joined by youth groups looking for some way to help. Businessmen came aboard and a true Green Survival effort began when the city council publicly endorsed the entire idea. The mayor became chief spokesman for the effort, and the first Green Survival City, USA, was the result. You can't enter Raleigh without seeing a sign announcing that fact.

Today there are 11 Green Survival cities, including one in Canada, as well as two Green Survival counties and several states where the governor has issued a proclamation declaring his to be a Green Survival State.

People who understand Green Survival in almost every city and town, as well as on the national level, have quickly become spokesmen for a positive approach to environmental action,

they are welcome guest speakers at meetings, on radio and television programs, in schools, before government bodies, wherever the subject of ecology and the conservation of our resources is in mind. For the first time plants have been put in their most valuable context, as functional tools to improve the lives of all of us.

The concepts we are talking about are so basic to a clean and healthy environment that other countries have picked up the theme. In Quebec Province of Canada it is called '*L'air pur*' and in the rest of Canada it is Green Survival. The term Green Survival was promoted in England for a time in the form of a tree planting program. There is a strong move now to get it going again full steam. In Germany, it's *Grun Ist Leben*, in Holland, *Groen is Leven*. Australia and New Zealand both have active Green Survival programs, Scandinavia is engaged in *Grona Ringen*, and we recently have been advised that Green Survival is a required subject in the public schools of Sao Paulo, Brazil!

Without trying to play psychologist or public relations expert, the AAN is convinced that each of us carries with him, in his mind, a list of priorities of things he would like to have. Perhaps the first is a house, followed by an automobile, then maybe a television set or a boat. Little conscious thought is given to the items on that want list until we find ourselves in a position, financially, where we can begin to think seriously about making a purchase. At that point, some definite decisions must be made. For example, if it's an automobile, will it be a two-door or a four-door? Will it have leather or felt upholstery? What quality tires will it have? Do we want automatic windows and door locks? In fact, what make of automobile do we prefer? If the next item on that list is a house, and we have reached the point where we can afford to buy one, what size lot do we want? How many bedrooms? In what neighborhood? Do we want a garage or a carport?

The important point here is that we never have to make these decisions until it is time to make the purchase. In the meantime, we carry around in the back of our minds that little want list that says a car or house or boat is going to be our next major purchase.

It is the AAN's contention that landscaping, the coordinated use of plant material, is seldom on that psychological list of desires. It is not there because there has never been developed a concept simple and basic enough for a person to carry around in his mind. As a result, purchases of plant material, by-and-large, happen most often on the spur-on-the-moment, on impulse. They are not longed-for, dreamed-about acquisitions that are carefully planned out to serve a purpose. We believe Green Survival concepts are beginning to change that. The many, many energy-saving, life-giving, noise-muffling, sight-screening, air-purifying, soil-stabilizing, tension-relieving, and beauty-making benefits of plant materials can be put in people's minds. Green Survival can and will be added to that all-important want list.

First, though, we must make a concerted effort to teach people all of the advantages plant material offers them. We must teach the functionality of our products. We must teach why to plant a tree or shrub. So Green Survival shows people new reasons and ways to use plant material. What else is it doing? I think it offers us the opportunity to create a very important image for plants. When I first came to the nursery industry, nearly 20 years ago, it was composed of mostly small businesses producing a product which one way or another consumers used plenty of in some years and no so much in others. Government surely had not discovered the nursery industry. We produced a useful product, sold most of it, and everyone was happy most of the time.

Now, we suddenly find out that our product is poisonous and so dangerous that one department of government, after conducting its own full investigation, has turned part of it over to another agency and asked it to determine whether or not what we have always thought were nature's gifts are really sinister products lurking everywhere. We find another department of government going into towns like Mulberry, Florida and ordering the ten-year-old median strip planting of palm trees to be torn out immediately, as dangerous objects to automobile drivers and passengers. We find in this year of serious droughts, plants lined up behind automobile car washes when it comes to

setting priorities for use of water. We are told that the chemicals we use in producing plants are dangerous to our environment and one after the other they have been taken off the market. And, regulations have been written for those remaining that are so complicated that their use is actually forbidden in production on an oak tree, for example, while it is approved for use in growing crops that people will eat.

The list goes on and on. A few winters ago, when the first energy shortage was experienced in our country, we suddenly found that the growing of our product was not considered by government to be a part of agriculture, and hence, the priority of fuel to keep our greenhouses warm enough to avoid the death of plants growing in them was actually nonexistent. We walked the streets of Washington trying to find responsible officials in those early days of the Federal Energy Administration who could quickly help us save plants growing in a greenhouse that would actually become available to customers many years down the road. We bluffed our way through that winter and finally, after the crisis was over we obtained from government priorities with which we can live.

How does Green Survival fit into all of this? It can create an image for our product in the minds of people that will place it where it belongs. Not as a pretty plant to be looked at, but as a functional, contributing, essential part of our environment. The other day in Des Moines, Iowa an

ordinance was passed severely restricting the use of water in that city. Only because of the coincidence that someone happened to be in the audience who had plants in his mind was there a provision placed in the new regulation allowing for minimum watering of new plantings. Why didn't someone on the city council think of it himself? Simply because those of us who understand and know the value of plants have never spread the word adequately. Why could officials in government decide our production was not part of agriculture and did not need minimum fuel allotments to stay alive? Because we have not spread the message adequately. Why are the trees ordered cut down in Mulberry, Florida and all over the country by our highway departments, while ten-by-ten concrete lamp posts border those same highways? Because we have not adequately shown the need for our green, growing gifts of nature.

And so I say to you, let us together learn the story of Green Survival. And then, teach everyone the series of small steps each of us can take to improve the quality of our lives. It will take us all, using the right language, to put plants where they belong in our society.

Green Survival, it's something you do. It depends on you!

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ABSTRACT

Thompson, S.V. *et al.* 1977. **Pesticide applications can be reduced by forecasting the occurrence of fireblight bacteria.** California Agriculture 31(10): 12-14.

Fireblight, caused by the bacterium *Erwinia amylovora*, is an erratic and devastating disease. Blight "strikes" have been continuously and carefully pruned from diseased trees since fireblight first arrived in California. Chemical spray treatments, first used to control the disease in the 1940's, have been relied upon heavily, especially in the critical flowering period. Until recently, it has been common practice to spray or dust trees with copper or antibiotic materials at 5-day intervals throughout the flowering period. It became apparent that spray applications were frequently unnecessary. Lack of data on the occurrence of the bacteria prohibited the development of a usable forecasting system. In the late 1960's we began developing a selective, differential growth medium for the isolation of fireblight bacteria. This medium has been a key element in the development of a monitoring program that allowed us to correlate the occurrence of fireblight bacteria with weather.