

Guest Column



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As North Dakota citizens, we desire to keep our state alive and progressive. In order to do this, our first concern must be for the people who live, work and socialize in our state.

What will the future hold for North Dakota by 2076? One hundred years ago, our state was virtually an unscarred prairie. Today, 618,000 people live within its boundaries. In the future we can expect developments and increases in agricultural crop production, livestock management and coal development and our irrigation potential. How will this increased technology affect the population in the future? Crops and minerals can be produced today in greater quantities, with fewer people needed to manage operations than in the past. Will this be the eventual fate of North Dakota?

Where do people fit living in the present economy? Twenty-four per cent of our people live on farms and are directly responsible for agricultural production. Thirty per cent are rural non-farm (towns under 2,500 population) and 46 per cent are urban. The question then arises, since the state has shown a decline in population, what area of agricultural research, extension or teaching may aid in stabilizing the total population?

Results of research on potatoes and garden vegetables, fruits and woody and herbaceous ornamentals can be applied and used by North Dakotans. Such information will directly benefit all segments of the population. An appreciation of horticulture, whether as a business or as an enjoyable hobby, can be an important tool in helping to stabilize our population.

Aesthetics means "relation to the beautiful as distinguished from the pleasing, the moral, the financial and the useful." It is a needed area of life that is difficult to measure financially. Every civilization as it matures has emphasized horticultural

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On The Cover: Extension Visuals Specialist Matt Lanz graphically expresses some of the land use alternatives facing North Dakotans.

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BULK THIRD-CLASS

Guest Column —
(Continued from page 2)

tural aesthetics regardless of its agricultural or industrial basis. Examples include the Hanging Gardens of Babylon—one of the wonders of the ancient world; the development of the solarium, a prototype greenhouse, by the Romans; the palace and gardens of Versailles in France; the greens and informal landscapes of the English, and our own Peace Garden, a great tourist attraction.

In a young and developing community, people are vitally involved in producing the necessities of life—food, clothing and shelter; consequently, little time is available for the finer things of life. As a society matures, more time and resources become available. With more leisure and affluence comes security. North Dakota is now at this stage of development. We no longer need to devote our total assets and energies to the basic needs, but we must also consider other aspects of living to continue growing.

Research, extension and teaching in horticulture and forestry deal with a group of plants—trees, shrubs, flowers and turf—that are functional as well as aesthetic. The farmstead shelterbelt is functional, but its natural beauty throughout the year is aesthetic.

Perhaps a major effect of the functional and aesthetic use of plants is best shown by landscape

plantings around homes, roadsides, parks, golf courses and industrial sites. Projects of renovation, coupled with the use of plants, will aid in stabilizing the rural and small town populations, because they develop a pleasing or aesthetic appearance. Larger towns have recognized the aesthetics of the use of plants by establishing forestry departments, malls, parks and pleasing ornamental plantings. Economic value of such plantings is hard to measure in conventional dollars and cents, but citizens can be proud of their environment and satisfied, stable citizens. To keep North Dakota alive we must consider the needs and desires of its people.

Personal sentiments of pleasure, of sadness or of achievement can be expressed by ornamentals. The value of ornamental plants as a therapeutic agent has been demonstrated. Enrollment in horticulture at the educational level is at its highest.

People need aesthetics to enrich their life style. Civic leaders, teachers and researchers must realize that aesthetics in the human environment are a necessary part of society. They should not completely focus on dollars and cents or bushels and pounds. No one questions the importance of financial returns, but another reality is the need for the aesthetics which can give lasting satisfaction and stability to the quality of life of North Dakota's most important resource—its people.