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ADVERTISING **Mitchell Petersen, Inc.**
1775 Jamieson Street
Suite 210
Alexandria, VA 22314-5715
(703) 518-4700
FAX: (703) 518-8495

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An Inside Look

DURING MY undergraduate days at North Carolina State University, I befriended an elderly woman in Raleigh who invited me to paint watercolors of the diverse plants in her city garden. Her given name was Gertrude, but late in life she adopted the name “Nancy,” as more admirable. I painted in her garden regularly for more than two years and she was always interested in hearing what I was learning about the newest developments in plant breeding and research.

Despite living at a time when synthetic chemical pesticides were typically the first line of defense against plant pests, Nancy liked to try out homemade preparations she concocted using soapy water, vegetable oils, baking soda and other kitchen products. She used boiling water to kill weeds in her pathways, gathered up dropped rose leaves to reduce the spread of black spot, and blasted aphids off of plants with her garden hose. In short, she was “going green” well ahead of her time.

Now, as more and more pesticides are being phased out, gardeners will, like Nancy, have to seek alternative controls for the pests that plague their gardens. Fortunately, companies are stepping up research on more environmentally friendly pesticides and many new products have emerged in the last few years to fill the breach.

In this issue, Associate Editor Carole Ottesen details the emergence of the green movement in American gardening from its roots in progressive agriculture in 20th-century England to the writings of American icons such as Aldo Leopold, Jerome Rodale, and Rachel Carson, and the formation of the Environmental Protection Agency in 1970. She relates how, in the last decade, some garden supply stores, botanical gardens, and even nurseries have reduced or eliminated application of chemical pesticides by using the concept of integrated pest management (IPM), a multifaceted approach to controlling pest and disease problems.

The AHS SMARTGARDEN™ program also addresses environmentally responsible pest control by promoting easy ways to reduce the likelihood of pests and diseases. These include selecting the right plant for the right place using USDA hardiness and AHS heat zones; choosing disease-resistant cultivars whenever possible; rotating vegetable crops; and following proper planting techniques to ensure plants develop healthy root systems.

If Nancy were alive today, I suspect she would be surprised to find how long it has taken mainstream gardeners to adopt the methods she was using to control pests 50 years ago. Let AHS's publications guide you to become more environmentally responsible gardeners.

Ever in green,



—H. Marc Cathey, *AHS President Emeritus*

