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NOTES FROM RIVER FARM

WE TEND TO TAKE the beauty of the natural world around us for granted. So it's a shock to us when bulldozers arrive in the name of progress and destroy it. Faced with this situation, we try our best to counter the depressing effects of this destruction and rally our family and friends to plant trees and flowers, to create new parks and gardens. But while this is a worthy accomplishment in its own right, it can never match what was lost.

It is not the same to replace the magnificence of a giant live oak, sugar maple, or osage orange with a parking lot full of sapling trees next to a large, imposing building, no matter how beautiful or architecturally creative the building. If we are to ensure that the beauty of our natural environment is to be sustained in our communities, we have a major challenge in front of us.

We are challenged to determine ways to protect natural areas—areas with big trees, native soils, and unspoiled water systems—in our communities. We are challenged to understand just what it takes to deliver beauty in our communities through cultivated plants and plantings. Just how big do the trees need to be? How much land do we need to set aside for parks and gardens? What kind of design and what level of maintenance will be required to ensure that the residents in our communities can treasure the beauty of the natural environment for years to come?

The American Horticultural Society is very focused on these issues. Our members and our board of directors care deeply about their communities and the important role that plants and gardens play in them. What we need is a way to identify role models, to find out who is already doing this well so that we can adopt similar programs in our own communities.

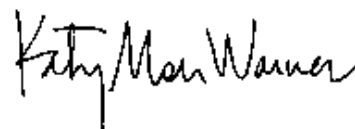
Recently, I have had the special privilege of working closely with two of AHS's partnering organizations—America in Bloom and Communities in Bloom—that are doing exactly that. They are recognizing communities, large and small, that are setting new standards for urban beautification.

This past September I attended the annual symposium for Communities in Bloom (CIB), held in Stratford, Ontario. During the symposium, more than 100 communities in Canada, the United States, and Europe were honored for their efforts in fostering civic pride, environmental responsibility, and beautification.

At its own award ceremony in Chicago, Illinois, America in Bloom (AIB) recognized 40 communities in the United States that have taken the extra step to add beauty to their communities and demonstrate respect for the natural environment (You can read more about the AIB program in an article on page 11.)

I encourage each of you to look for ways to participate in this effort. Contact America in Bloom (www.americainbloom.org), bring your community leaders together, do what it takes, and then nominate your community for an award. Let's truly make this continent bloom with the beauty of plants and flowers and gardens. Together, day by day, person by person, plant by plant, outstanding effort by outstanding effort, we can do it.

Happy Gardening!



—Katy Moss Warner, *AHS President*

