

Nursery Plants Acorns From Famous Trees



A CORNS from the famous Middleton Oak are being cultivated in a Texas nursery. The progeny will be sold under the registered trademark, "Heritage Oak."

On a visit to Charleston, S. C., last spring, nursery owner Wash Storm, Jr., and his wife visited Middleton Place to see the stately tree—a landmark in America's oldest landscaped gardens—estimated to be near its 1,000th birthday by the Charleston Museum.

"We read a description of the Middleton Oak and wanted to see it. We've been interested in selecting acorns from trees with historical significance for some time," the Storms explained.

Among the approximately 150,000 trees growing on their tree farm, there are off-spring of the Davy Crockett tree at the Alamo in San Antonio, Tex.; the Goose Island Oak, Goose Island State

Park, Texas, and "Oak Alley" in Vachery, La.

Historically, the Middleton Oak can hold its own. It was an Indian Trail Tree long before Columbus discovered America. In later centuries, it gave shade to successive generations of the Middleton family and their guests—including Henry Middleton, president of the First Continental Congress; Arthur Middleton, a signer of the Declaration of Independence; and his son, Henry, a governor of South Carolina and Ambassador to Russia. Since Middleton Place was opened to the public in the 1930s, it has been admired by thousands of visitors each year.

Storm started his nursery in 1938, suspending operations during World War II. He served in the Air Force for 4 years. In 1969 he sold more than 12,000 trees primarily to nurseries and landscapers. Orders for 1970 are even

greater with one shipment earmarked for the LBJ Library at the University of Texas. Other famous buyers are Disney World in Orlando, Fla., Six Flags Over Texas and the Texas Governor's Mansion in Austin.

Since opening the nursery, Storm has experimented with methods to produce fast-growing oaks. He relies on careful selection rather than hybridizing methods. He raises several varieties of oak as well as other trees and shrubs, but his concentration is on the live oak.

Discussing the growth potential of the live oak, Storm estimates that a fledgling with a trunk measuring one and one half inches in diameter may—within a decade—grow to a height of 15 to 20 feet and have a diameter measuring eight to 10 inches, but "only if the tree is properly planted and cared for."

An example of Storm's success with live oaks stands in the yard of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Carroll of Premont, Tex. Storm planted the tree in 1941. Today it has a circumference of almost seven feet near the base and a trunk diameter of nearly 28 inches.

The Middleton Oak acorns, he reports, are doing very well at this stage of their growth. Another shipment, gathered by high school students, will soon go into the fertile Texas earth. Some of the acorns are planted in fields, the others in four-inch pots. The young trees will be sold to beautify landscapes hundred of miles from their Ashley River home.

ant, this theme was played up.

The following year, going back to our authorities, it was confirmed that Merion was still the No. 1 grass. More new grasses were appearing on the market, and we needed this research information to carry on an effective campaign. Merion became the grass of Expo '67 in Montreal, as it had been at other fairs. The sod boom was on, more and more stadiums were installing Merion sod, and our TV featurette played up sod in color. Our boat "Miss Merion Bluegrass" had its play when it won the Orange Bowl Regatta and was seen on network television.

As a result of the research of the previous year, the booklet "Merion Still First" was conceived and widely distributed. Our members and

growers needed pepping up and the Merion seal program was adopted. Foreign seed was coming in that contained poa annua; it became necessary to call attention to the superiority of Northwest-grown seed in various ways, including carrying the message to golf course architects. Color slides were used for the first time in the television featurettes.

In 1969, special mailings were directed to the sod growers. A second sodding booklet going into aspects of maintenance became necessary, due to the large amount of mail on that subject. Competition was increasing from other new grasses; a study was begun on the best mixtures with Merion and these new grasses. Our crop this year had returned to a lower figure; but the

all-time sales figure of a disappearance of more than five million pounds had been achieved. The spring theme became a tie-in with National Lawn & Garden Week, a promotion instituted by the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

And now we are approaching the present. Before this, competition had been with other natural grasses. Suddenly the Houston Astrodome and artificial turf came into the news. As a public service, the Association has just published a booklet on the advantages and disadvantages of artificial turf and real grass; copies are available.

The complicated subject of regional adaptation of mixtures is still before us. But one thing is certain, "Merion is Still First."