



Robert Scott, president, John's Inc.

AN APOPKA, Florida firm is in the process of doubling 30,000 square feet of space for acclimatizing trees and tropical foliage plants for use in interior landscape designs and covered malls.

John's Inc. will be able to acclimatize trees up to 35 feet tall when new sheds are built. Presently Ficus and mahogany trees up to 22 feet tall are the largest in the acclimatizing house.

The firm has been experimenting for several years with the process of decreasing light and withholding water and fertilizer to harden plants to survive in the low light and low maintenance conditions found in interiors and malls.

In 1970, the firm built a 30,000 square foot shed with a network of polypropylene of different degrees of shade plus two different shades of paint on the roof.

The rigid plastic house is 18 foot high at one end and 14 feet high on the lower end. Two other sections of

the huge John's nursery also hold an overflow of materials to be acclimatized.

Wholesale value of the plant's being acclimatized is \$115,000.

Many plants, especially the larger ones, are moved into the acclimatizing house from almost full sun locations. Over a three-four month period the light intensity is reduced from 1,500-2,000 foot candle power to 400-500 foot candle power.

While the light is being reduced, water and fertilizer is also being decreased to harden the plants to conditions of low maintenance required in most enclosed malls.

Vern Buck, executive vice president of the 38 year old company, said plants brought in from full sun location drop some leaves when brought into the shade house. He said the black olive tree may drop its leaves once or twice but when leaves grow back, the trees are usually ready to sell.

"Various plants take varying

amounts of time to harden up but in general, three to six months time will harden up most plants and get them used to low light and maintenance conditions," Buck pointed out.

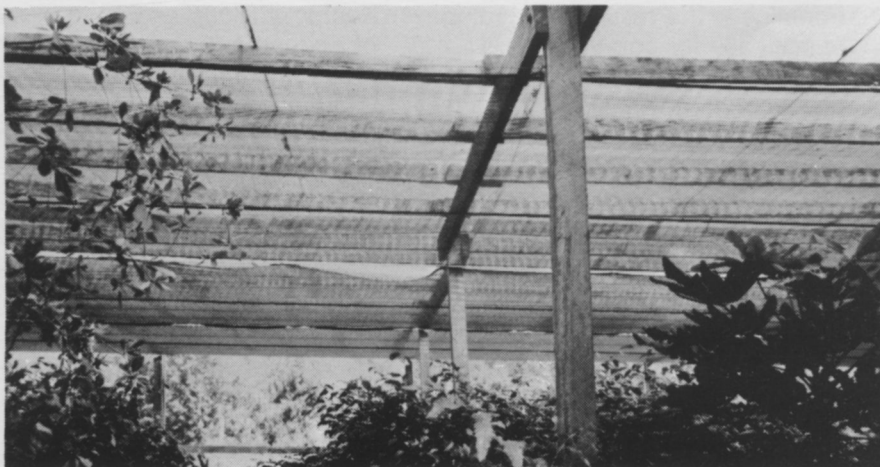
He suggested the black olive tree is one that should be used more often in interior landscape plans for malls. He said the tree will tolerate light conditions as low as 250-300 foot candle power but 400 is better for best leaf retention.

The shading material is strung on wires underneath the roof of the plastic house. It can be rolled back if desired or another layer can be placed over the first for more shade over a certain section to bring light down to minimum foot candles.

Watering plants in the three-fourths acre house is by hand. In general, water is withheld and plants are kept on the dry side.

Slow release fertilizers and systemic insecticides are used to keep plants in better shape for a longer time and to decrease the amount of

Outdoor Trees For Indoor Use



Polypropylene is hooked to strands of wire underneath the roof of John's acclimatizing house. Also, two different shades of paint are used on the rigid plastic roof.



The acclimatizing house is 30,000 square feet. Robert Scott carefully checks the condition of all plants valued at \$115,000.



Trees, palms and tropical foliage plants are acclimatized at John's Inc. by use of shade and reduction of water and fertilizer.

maintenance to be performed by the buyer of the plant.

Once a month inventory is taken and a new price and quantity list mailed to a selected group of buyers over the country who use and specialize in interior landscape plants. Wholesale price of the plants ranges from \$4 to \$2,000. for the largest trees.

Some of the plants in the acclimatizing house include silk oak and Norfolk Island pines, Ficus such as benjamina, decora, pandurata, areca, Rhapsis, and Phoenix Roebelini palms and other palms.

There are also various philodendrons such as selloum, cordatum, and pertusum in pots and with poles. Vern Buck commented he would like to see more rigid specifications in bid jobs concerning acclimatizing plants for interior use. "This would help interior landscape people do a better job. Using acclimatized plants may cost more initially but they are better looking plants and replacement costs would be lower in the

long run," he said.

William H. Baker, ASLA member with the Winter Park, Fla. firm of Tom H. Wallis and Associates, said landscape architects have been limited in their use of interior landscape plants.

He said if nurseries can do more with materials specifically for this use, then landscape architects will have a broader spectrum from which to choose.

"By acclimatizing plants, more and more southern plant materials can be used in enclosed northern malls which are looking for a greater variety of greenery," he said.

Mr. Buck, who has been with John's for 37 years, said the firm has 8½ acres of greenhouses, 23 acres of shade house and 20 acres of podocarpus in open fields.

He said John's is doubling the amount of acclimatizing space to take care of demand for trees and tropical foliage plants that will thrive under low light and low maintenance conditions.



This ficus Pandurata or fiddle leaf fig (foreground) will be ready for a mall or similar interior in a few weeks. Light intensity is reduced over a 3-month period from 1,500-2,000 foot candle power to 400-500 foot candle power.

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