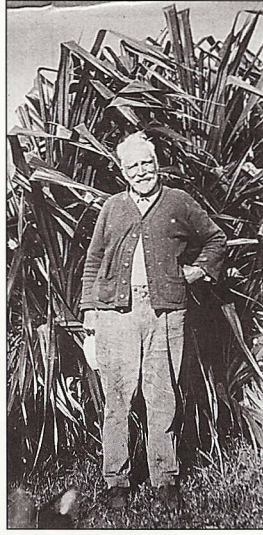


Tribute to an Early Plant-Man, Henry Nehrling

"Our indigenous flora is varied and beautiful. In the contemplation of garden and park, the native trees and shrubs should always form the foundation." – Dr. Henry Nehrling, "Future Possibilities in Florida Horticulture," early 1900s



Dr. Nehrling, ever the gardener, in Naples, 1927.

Richard Nehrling, grandson of one of Florida's legendary plantsmen, Henry Nehrling, is seeking official state recognition of his grandfather's many contributions to Florida horticulture. Henry Nehrling tested over three thousand plant species and successfully introduced about three hundred new and beneficial plants and trees to the Florida landscape, including caladiums, for which he is perhaps best known, as well as hybridized amaryllis, bromeliads, cycads, water-lilies, and crinums. His botanical gardens in Gotha and Naples were accredited experimental stations for the U.S. Government. Botanists from around the world sought him out for his knowledge of tropical and sub-tropical bamboos and palms.

FNPS members, particularly those who are "field people," will appreciate the following tribute, written by another famous Florida plantsman, David Fairchild, upon Nehrling's death in 1929.

"Dr. Henry Nehrling was a born plant-man as proven by his early interest in plants and his extraordinary powers of observation...

It is to the lasting honor of Dr. Nehrling and a matter of historical moment, that he studied closely every species of tree, shrub, or vine that he grew ...

He preferred to study the plants themselves rather than to read about them. This

was one of the reasons that he added to our knowledge of plant behavior in Florida in a way he could never have done through reading about them in encyclopedias and dictionaries, which are more of a historical than a first hand store of information.

I emphasize this character of Dr. Nehrling's mind for I believe it of peculiar importance and significance to Garden Club members. If they

desire to add some grains of sand to the little pile that others before them have made — sand being knowledge — let them study their plants in the early morning as Dr. Nehrling did, not running to the literature to find the names of their plants and then sitting down to see what others have recorded about them in the past ...

Such minds as his have always appealed to me as of great value in a community. They appear to be children's minds with all the keenness and delight which child minds show toward things around them and with long memories of what has been seen.

How often, alas, book schooling drowns the children who love nature, with a Niagara of words and the word is not the thing ...

I have so many memories of Dr. Nehrling that I could run on as I can always about the real naturalists I have known. Without them where would this world of human haters land us? The wild life is passing. Man is destroying it. Dr. Nehrling loved it and taught thousands to follow in his lead."

To assist in the effort to obtain official recognition for Henry Nehrling, please write his grandson, Richard Nehrling, at the following address: 2700 Liberty Lane, Jacksonville Beach 32250.

