

City Hall's Elegant Garden

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Sentinel Garden Writer

Santa Cruz City Hall offers the public an exhibition garden maintained to match the most elegant private mansion. In addition to some fine old plants, a few of them going back to the Hihn Estate, the garden maintains an ever-changing display of plants that do well in this area.

The Church Street garden is designed as a Spanish courtyard with a fountain and stone benches where the visitor may relax and enjoy the view. The wall on the sunny side of the courtyard is dramatized by the bold forms of cactus of the cereus family which grow as high as the roof. Echinium planted in front of the cactus add to the effect with their angular stems and horizontal whorls of leaves at the ends of the stems. These provide large spikelike clusters of bright blue flowers in early spring. In summer a group of very fine lilies will appear between the echium.

Square planting areas surround the fountain. Each is centered by an orange tree surrounded by pansies and nemesia. The pansies are giant flowered, compact and very well grown. Nemesia might be said to be the star of the spring display. These annuals are low growing, very floriferous, and very bright with their blends of yellow, orange, pink, and red. Both the pansies and nemesia were set out in late fall as bedding plants for early spring bloom. As they go out of bloom they will be replaced by marigold and other summer and fall blooming annuals.

The constantly changing annuals which keep the gardens bright are from local nurseries and from the private greenhouse of Richard Criswell. Criswell, trained by the late Tod Gresham, is the man responsible for the perfectly manicured lawns and the ever changing flower display at city hall.

A back corner of the courtyard features a fine specimen of Norfolk Island Pine (Star Pine). Redwood planters contain pieris (sometimes called lily-of-the-valley shrub). These plants are related to rhododendron and azaleas and have the same cultural needs. They have compact evergreen leaves (some species variegated). The flowers are white in pendulous clusters in spring. Bright pink petunias are blooming in beds along one side. There are beds of snapdragons and dwarf marigolds along the back. Criswell prefers the First Lady variety



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of marigolds because of their large double heads on low compact plants.

An angular iron staircase creates a shaded stairwell. It contains tree fern, camellia, azalea, clivia, impatiens, and a planter containing cymbidium is often added when they are in bloom.

The broad cement planter connecting the courtyard with the parking lot has been planted with lantana, pittosporum and deciduous azaleas. The parking lot has a very attractive ornamental hedge. The parking strip has been planted with liquidambar, a handsome tree any time of year and a real beauty in the fall when the foliage of select species turns bright scarlet.

It is the Center Street garden which is the showcase for an ever changing array of seasonal bloom. The spring display included beds of King Louie XIV tulips, a yellow and red blend, bordered with nemesia. A colorful bed of stock also is bordered with nemesia. White petunias are bordered with purple sweet alyssum. Early dwarf dahlias are coming into bloom. A particularly attractive combination is a bed of maroon snaps against a background of white foxglove with maroon spots by the street entrance.

The long bed on the Church Street side of the front garden has contained some very fine Japanese iris. These are contrasted with a clump of white Watsonia. The bed also contains purple gladiolus, columbine and white snapdragons. It is bordered with pansies and nemesia.

The bed across the front features assorted asters, Diamond Jubilee Marigold, calendula and buttons mums. Some very fine cymbidiums in redwood planter have been in bloom throughout the spring across the front of the building. When they finish bloom-

ing dahlias will replace them.

The bed at the end of the police wing earlier featured unsurpassable tulips in a soft purple shade. It now has delphinium and peonies, to be followed by dahlias. A shaded bed on the police side contains fibrous begonias and cyclamen. The rose garden is here also and has just reached its peak of bloom.

In addition to the ever changing display of flowers, the front garden contains some particularly fine specimen plants. On the left side of the center court is a Chinese Magnolia of considerable age. It may in fact be the one Albert Wilson mentioned in his listing of Historic Trees of Santa Cruz in 1938. If so, he lists it as having been planted in 1895. The Hollywood Juniper are of exceptional condition and maturity. There are two fine hibiscus, bay trees, and a very interesting cantua buxifolia. This plant which stands by the entrance to the covered porch is an evergreen shrub with small leaves and bright rose tubular flowers.

The most rare is the Franklin tree in the front border along Center street. Now it resembles a small fruit tree, but in August it will have large white bloom against crimson foliage.

Garden CHECK-LIST

1. May is a good month to start annuals for garden color during the hot summer months. Salvia, Celosia (Cockscomb), Zinnias, and Dwarf Dahlias are but four to rely on for bright, continuous color.
2. Plant Roses from containers. Newer varieties and all-time favorites are in full bloom now at C.A.N. nurseries in plant containers.
3. Feed Azaleas and Camellias with an acid-type plant food this month. Water them frequently during the warm weather.
4. Rhododendrons are still

Aptos Garden