

Manila and the Singapore Gardens

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THE NATIONAL MUSEUM of the Philippines, in Manila, greets the Singapore Botanic Gardens on the occasion of its centenary. We in the Philippines, who have immensely and continuously profited by its goodwill and co-operation, have every reason to feel proud of its achievement.

For the last 100 years, the Singapore Botanic Gardens and Herbarium have been known as institutions which are not only useful to Malaya but to all scientists the world over. While both have served as places of recreation and education for the people of Malaya, they have contributed their own share in the dissemination of plant knowledge and distribution of plant species to all parts of the world. The Herbarium itself is well known for its valuable collections and adequate library and serves as a seat for research and study of the flora of Malaya.

Many famous names have served as directors of the Gardens and many of its botanists have made invaluable contributions not only to the flora of Malaya, but also to that of Malaysia. Their works appear in the *Gardens' Bulletin*, which, likewise, has been considered as an invaluable scientific publication.

Our first scientific contact with the Singapore Botanic Gardens was established after the year 1910 by the late chief botanist (later director) Dr. Elmer D. Merrill, of our Bureau of Science. He had started the exchanges in botanical knowledge as well as in botanical specimens, which are equally valuable to both institutions. This co-operative work was continued by me after 1923 when Dr. Merrill left the Philippines and I became an official of the Philippines National Museum, which handles botany as well as all divisions of natural history. Besides our exchanges of specimens we also exchanged our publications—the *Gardens' Bulletin* for the *Philippine Journal of Science*, and *vice-versa*—and loaned Philippine and other Indo-Malayan mounted herbarium material to Malayan specialists for their study of Philippine representatives of various plant families or for their preparation of monographs on botanical groups.

It is a pleasure to recall at this time my personal visits to the Gardens—one in August 1928 and another in November 1938. From this latter visit I brought home with me some cuttings of the various varieties of bougainvilleas and a seedling of *Lagerstroemia floribunda*. The former now adorns the gardens of Malacañang, official home of the President of the Philippines, while the latter is a full-grown tree now serving as a graceful ornament in my private garden. The late Mr. Wester also brought many ornamentals from the Singapore Botanic Gardens.

The Singapore Botanic Gardens was and still is the centre of botanical work on the Malayan flora, just as Manila was and is for the Philippine flora. Despite the complete destruction of our herbarium during the war, the Philippines is at present in a position to begin—as it has already begun—to rebuild its collection and regain its place in its own field.

With such thoughts as the above on our past contacts and exchanges and close associations and co-operation in our particular branch of science, the centennial celebration of the Singapore Botanic Gardens has become truly significant to us. It is my hope that we can continue to carry on our present harmonious relationship for the mutual benefit and satisfaction that such relationship can bring us.