

# SCIENCE

FRIDAY, MAY 6, 1910

BOTANICAL GARDENS<sup>1</sup>

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## THE ADMINISTRATION OF BOTANICAL GARDENS

THE common idea of a botanical garden appears to be that of a collection of many kinds of plants chiefly marked by their lack of beauty and unattractive arrangement. A fair average impression of most botanical gardens would perhaps be that of large collections of living plants, grouped for reasons of economy and convenience, like the bottles on the shelves of a laboratory, with little regard to their individual or collective appearance: variety and some sort of classification are fundamental elements of this mental picture. It is a question how far this idea may be modified without passing the limits of popular acceptance of any definition that may be given of a botanical garden.

Such gardens originated in the herb gardens of the middle ages, which were almost as natural an outgrowth of the use of simples as a field of wheat or yams was of the use of vegetable food—though later reached. With the teaching of medicine they became demonstration gardens closely limited to the vegetable materia medica. Travel and exploration brought to them the curiosities of the vegetable kingdom. With the development of taxonomy, they have become its exponents, varying into epitomes of local or cosmic plant communities. Morphology and physiology, as these subjects progressively claimed attention, have in turn left their imprint on the gardens. Through it all, variety and economical and

<sup>1</sup> A symposium given before Section G, American Association for the Advancement of Science, at the Boston meeting, Tuesday, December 28, 1909.