

Local Ranch is Sanctuary for Flora of State

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Approximately fifty newspaper men and their wives were guests Tuesday of Mrs. Susanna Bixby Bryant, founder of the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, located in Santa Ana canyon on the historic ranch of the same name. The meeting and luncheon served to the guests in the ranch house at noon were for the purpose of acquainting Southern California with the progress which is being made in the development of this marvelous project.

All Yorba Lindans are probably aware of the existence of the great ranch in the canyon nearby. A majority of them know, too, that it produces some of the best quality Valencia oranges grown in this country and that its orange acreage comprises thousands of the finest Valencia trees perhaps in the entire world. Yet by that strange home—blindness from which all of us suffer in degree, perhaps not one person out of ten really knows the actual story of the Rancho Santa Ana or what its rapidly developing botanic garden will mean to the state of California and the world when it is completed.

Rancho Santa Ana was purchased in 1875 from the heirs of Don Bernardo Yorba, son of Don Jose Antonio Yorba, original Spanish grantee in the country. The purchaser was J.W. Bixby, native of the state of Maine. It was through the foresight of Mr. Bixby's daughter, Mrs. Susanna Bixby Bryant, that the plan for the botanic garden was conceived and it is through her efforts that it is rapidly taking shape.

When completed, the ranch's property will be a huge park many acres in extent, every foot of it under irrigation by an overhead sprinkler system.

On these acres will be planted specimens of every floral species native to the state of California, some 6000 in number. The plantings are being carefully worked out by landscape gardeners and will cover the grass covered hills about the ranch house with a floral carpet every inch of which will be of deep interest to those who have even the remotest acquaintance with botany or with flowers.

One of the interesting angles in connection with this vast planting is the fact that it will offer permanent sanctuary to many specimens now on the verge of extinction in the relentless encroachment of man-made civilization. Several such specimens have already been discovered, one of them in the San Fernando valley to which journeys were made every year for the past five years to obtain seed from the plants. Now less than 100 of these plants remain in their native habitat but at the Santa Ana ranch. Pots hold several hundred seedlings of this particular variety.

Still another of these vanishing specimens is the famous Torrey pine, a few of which still stand on the cliffs above the Pacific not far from La Jolla. But this tree, too, is perpetuated, for at Rancho Santa Ana are several hundred young seedlings already two or three feet tall in height

The work being conducted at the rancho is not without its more practical side as well as otherwise. An instance is found in the case of a native Orange county cypress. Monterey cypress has long been used as windbreak. It is, however, very susceptible to attack from a certain type of blight disease. The Orange county plant is not so subject, and is, moreover, quite as rapid a grower and in every other way as satisfactory as the Monterey cypress. Accordingly the Rancho nursery presented Farm Advisor Wahlberg recently with several hundred specimens of the Orange county cypress which have been distributed by Mr. Wahlberg and performance of which will be closely checked by agricultural authorities.

One of the most interesting of many exhibits now available in the ranch grounds is a section devoted to Orange county flora. Here are to be found growing every tree, flower, bush and shrub native to this county. Inspection of this section alone will take a day's time.

Work on the ranch is performed by laborers who make their homes there, and its management is under the direction of several trained botanists. The nursery, garden site and herbarium are open for public inspection each Thursday in April, May and June, and by special arrangement on other dates. Visitors are admitted by card only, obtained by written request directed to Mrs. Susanna Bixby Bryant, 3210 West Adams boulevard, Los Angeles.

A limited number of cards are issued each visiting day in order to make it possible for the men in charge to act as hosts to the visitors and show them the points of greatest interest. It is therefore an excellent idea to ask for admission a considerable time in advance. Visitors wishing to bring picnic lunches may do so, but should mention this fact in order to make reservation for tables and benches in the garden picnic grounds.