VISITORS in the Arnold Arboretum this spring will notice that there is a brown mulching material around many of the trees and shrubs on the grounds and along the long lines of shrubs in the shrub collection adjacent to the Forest Hills Gate. This material is the shells of the cocoa bean which is being used as a trial. It has several advantages but some disadvantages, as well. It is too soon for us to know its general effect on the plants so that recommendations for its use at this time would be premature.

In the first place, we were able to obtain it this winter at no expense but the hauling—rather an asset to the Arboretum! Secondly, it does not burn vigorously nor does it blow much in the wind. Any mulch on soils in this area is usually better than none, and it does aid materially in conserving soil moisture, a very important factor in drought periods. It comes dry from the factory, is easily applied and contains a considerable amount of nitrogen. The spent hops which we were using for so many years is now unavailable to us, the chief reason why so much of the cocoa-shell mulch has been applied this winter.

There are apparent disadvantages. When first applied and moist, especially in hot weather, it will heat to such an extent that if it is applied to depths of six inches at the base of young plants, the high temperature can kill the young stems. This is the reason why it is being kept in the Arboretum at a distance of a foot or so from the plant stems. As it begins to disintegrate, it becomes mouldy and extremely slippery, actually dangerous for one to walk on. Then, as it dries off on the surface during dry periods, it can cake on the top to such an extent that there may be danger of insufficient air filtering through to the roots of surface rooted plants like rhododendrons and azaleas. We have not used it extensively on the ericaceous plants. A high concentration of potash salts can be leached out of the
mulech and may cause some plant injury. Also, if applied to a flower border, for instance, it certainly would not be the nicest material to dig in with the hands.

Test applications of this material have been used on experimental plants at the Case Estates in Weston, to ascertain at what depths it may be injurious to vigorous growing shrubs. Applied as it has been in the Arboretum, seldom over four inches deep and well away from the base of the plants, it is hoped that only good results will be obtained, but it must be emphasized that there may be injury to some plants from a high accumulation of potash salts. Visitors can check these results for themselves throughout the spring and summer merely by observing the reactions of the plants so treated.

**YELLOW LABELS**

Another addition to the plantings of the Arboretum this spring is a new, small yellow label marked "Introduced into the United States by the Arnold Arboretum." Nearly 1,800 of these have been placed on the shrubs and trees about the grounds and the job is not yet completed. This label signifies that the plant on which it appears was first brought into the United States by the Arboretum. Lest there be some who might be overly critical, it must be noted here that this label will appear on some plants native to North America; but, though somewhat ambiguous in this case, the label signifies that this native American plant was first brought into cultivation by the Arboretum. So, one now can begin to see at a glance the hundreds of plants the Arboretum takes credit for introducing.

**BLOOMING DATES**

The season has been a confusing one. Many shrubs bloomed earlier than normal, then there followed a cold spell in early April which placed blooming dates back on schedule. This, in turn, was followed by very warm, dry weather for several weeks, which is now forcing most plants into very early bloom again. Last year, the season was very retarded, with few lilacs in bloom until the end of May. This year, they will bloom a full week earlier than their usual time, which is about the third week of May. To give some idea of the earliness of spring in past years, the willow tree across the brook from the Administration Building turned green on the following dates:

- 1950—April 28
- 1951—April 8
- 1952—April 19
- 1953—April 5
- 1954—April 15
- 1955—April 14
- 1956—May 3
- 1957—April 21*

* This was followed by truly hot weather, thus further advancing blooming dates.
PLATE IX

There are, undoubtedly, too many billboards, but if they must be used, this one might be considered less controversial than most. It was displayed in full color for several months last year in Brookline, Mass., and depicts the Forest Hills Entrance of the Arnold Arboretum as it now appears.
Some of the blooming dates for May are estimated (at this time!) to be:

**Week of May 5**
- Oriental Flowering Crab Apples
- Oriental Quinces
- Early Lilacs (*Syringa oblata* and varieties)

**Week of May 12**
- Common Lilac and its many varieties
- Flowering Dogwood

**Week of May 19**
- Chinese Lilac and varieties
- Pinxterbloom (as well as *Rhododendron rosea*)
- *Rhododendron "Boule de Neige"* and "Mont Blanc"
- Hawthorns—many
- Shrubby Honeysuckles—many
- Primrose Rose
- Viburnums—several

**SUNDAY, MAY 12, IS OPEN HOUSE AT THE CASE ESTATES**

For all those who would like to become more familiar with the plantings on the Case Estates of the Arnold Arboretum in Weston, this is an excellent opportunity. Staff members will be stationed about the grounds from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., to give directions and to answer questions concerning the plants. The Case Estates are situated in the center of the Town of Weston adjacent to the public school buildings on Wellesley Street.

Of particular interest will be the Ground Cover Demonstration Plots, with well over 150 different plants; the Small Tree Demonstration Plots, with about 80 different small trees suitable for the small garden; the Small-Shrub and Perennial Garden; the new Pruning Demonstration Plots, Dwarf Apple Trial Plots, and the many hundreds of plants growing in the nurseries. The Case Estates are easily accessible on Wellesley Street, Weston, from Routes 9, 20, and 30.

**SUNDAY, MAY 19, IS OPEN HOUSE IN THE ARNOLD ARBORETUM**

Staff members will also be strategically located about the grounds of the Arnold Arboretum on Sunday, May 19, to give directions and to answer questions from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Originally, when this date was set, it was hoped the lilacs would be in full bloom, but unusually warm weather will force a majority of them into bloom a week sooner. However, there are always hundreds of plants in bloom at this time of year, so that a visit is a real experience for anyone interested in plants.

Parking will be permitted on this day only, inside the Arboretum from the Centre Street Gate (entrance from Route 1) to the South Street Gate. Parking is also possible immediately outside the grounds. The Arboretum is in Jamaica Plain at the junction of Centre Street (Route 1) and the Arborway (Routes 3, 28, and 138).

Donald Wyman