More About Tours of Botanists and Gardeners in China

by Shiu Ying Hu

Recently, an unusually large number of letters came to me from Arnoldia readers regarding my report on the "Tour of a Botanist in China" (35: 264-295. 1975). Two letters came from botanical friends in Peking, suggesting areas that need corrections; the other letters brought questions from botanists, horticulturists, dendrologists, landscape gardeners, etc., who are interested in going to the People's Republic of China to visit gardens and experimental stations. The purpose of this short article is to make necessary corrections in my former report, and to answer questions concerning the application for, and planning of, tours to China.

Corrections in Former Report

Regarding the Institute of Botany, Academia Sinica, referred to on page 276, the herbarium and library of the Institute have the collections of the former Fan Memorial Institute of Biology and those of the former Laboratory of Botany, National Academy of Peiping. On the next page, the Flora Reipublicae Popularis Sinicae was mentioned. The four volumes already published are: Pteridophyta: Ophioglossaceae - Oleandraceae, Rosaceae, Cyperaceae, and Scrophulariaceae (Part II). In the same paragraph, the enlarged Sixth National Convention was called by the Academia Sinica.

In order to prepare a report on my tour in China while my memory was fresh, I wrote the article in Hongkong, where the library facilities for botanical publications are inadequate. It was published before I returned to the Arnold Arboretum where the volumes of the flora mentioned above are available. The outline map used for illustrating the route of my trip is an old one used by people outside China. The contemporary term for "Manchuria" is the Northeast.

Answers to Inquiries

The questions that I have received from people interested in visiting China may be grouped into three categories: (1) application,
(2) places to visit, and (3) time and expenses. Readers are advised to refer to my former report, and to consider the following information as supplementary material.

Application: The first rule about tours to China is that the application for entry visas must be made with the official representatives of the People's Republic of China in the country of the applicants. In the United States of America, this is the Liaison Office, People's Republic of China, 2300 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Washington, D. C. 20008. In other countries it may be the Chinese Embassy or Consulate.

The procedure for applying varies with the size of the visiting group. I have known people who went to China as individuals, or in small groups representing academic or research institutions, or as special interest tours of twenty to twenty-five. People who intend to make the trip as individuals can write to the consulate or the liaison office, or go in person, to ask for application forms. Those who plan to visit China in groups must have a leader who represents them in all communication with the liaison office. In writing to ask for the application forms, it will be helpful to state the nature of the group, the purpose of the visit, a list of the participants, and the places hoped to be included in the tour.

Programs of touring groups within China are prepared by the China Travel Service (CTS), which has various routes for different interest groups. However, it will help the CTS program makers when they know the intention of the group in visiting certain places, gardens, institutions, and people. In consultation with the botanical, horticultural, agricultural, and forestry organizations of the country, officers of CTS often try to include the specific places and people desired. In the tour in which I participated in the summer of 1975, I was the only person interested in botanical institutions and botanists in China. In my application, I listed over two dozen people and botanical gardens and institutions. Arrangements were made for me to see a large number of these.

Places to Visit: In 1963, I participated in a tour of the International Dendrological Society in the eastern United States of America. From this experience, I know the kind of gardens, natural areas, and botanical institutions European and American visitors like to see. My limited experience of living and traveling in China, and the information that my friends shared with me, enable me to tell approximately what places are available in China to satisfy the botanically minded or horticulturally inclined foreign visitors. For these reasons, I venture to offer a tentative itinerary for the reference of future tour planners.

The places suggested are marked by numbers on a map. Some of the places are mentioned in the letters of inquiry received. The insert of the map shows the longitudinally and latitudinally comparable positions of China and the USA and may help some tourists to plan the
kind of clothes to take along. There is no luggage problem within China, for all transportation and baggage are taken care of by the CTS.

1. Hongkong: Assuming that the tour lasts for a month and the group enters China via Hongkong, two or three days should be scheduled for seeing the vegetation and gardens there. The vegetation of Victoria Island has been under protection from fire for over one hundred years. The walk over the Peak will give a general idea of the species of Hongkong forests. In the New Territories, there is a beautiful 300-acre private garden — Kadoorie Farm — which is open to the public. It has a unique natural setting with streams, falls, colorful plantings, and spectacular view of the surrounding countryside with farms in the plains and a vegetation of fire-climax on the hillsides. If time allows, a stop should be made at the Tai-po-Kau Forestry Station of the Hongkong Government. Here one can see the results of afforestation under government management, the regeneration of a natural forest from a former village woods protected from cutting and fire, and the magnificent bamboo gardens planted in the 1930s when F. A. McClure was studying the bamboos of South China. Some of his species can be seen in this garden.

2. Canton: If the group is interested in the tropical gardens of China, two or three days should be allowed for Canton. In addition to the parks and gardens scheduled by CTS, requests should be made for visits to Kwangtung Botanical Garden, and the present Sunyatsen University located in the campus of former Lingnan University where F. A. McClure planted his Bamboo Garden Permission may be obtained for visiting the following places of botanical and horticultural interest: Huang-pu (Whampao) where Peter Osbeck collected for Linnaeus in 1751 and Henry Fletcher Hance resided for a quarter of a century from 1860 onward; and Hua-ti (Fate-Flower Gardens) where William Kerr, the Botanical Collector of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, obtained his specimens in the 1800s and where John Reeves got his plants for the Royal Horticultural Society, London in the 1810-20s.

3. Hangchow. Three or four days should be saved for this garden city of China. The CTS program covers many gardens by lakes and in hills (Fig. 1) and temple grounds. Special request must be made for visiting the Hangchow Botanical Garden, with particular emphasis on seeing the portion set aside as a natural reservation.

4. Shanghai: When our party was in Shanghai, we were shown schools and industry. After I returned to Canton, I was told of Miss S. K. Cheng’s work in establishing the Shanghai Botanical Garden. Request should be made to see it.

5. Soochow. A minimum of three days should be allowed for this area. The program of CTS includes many gardens within the city, and the Tai Lake commune which takes the group into the countryside. The gardens in Soochow with the moon gates (Figure 2), and
Fig. 1. The Flower Creek Park of Hangchow including lakes and hills, with beautiful lawns, impressive deodar-cedar, graceful willows, elegant pavilions, and many interesting plants. (See Arnoldia 35. 268 for details).

the rock work are famous throughout China, and have been treated as a stereotype of Chinese gardens in many western books. They are old, and some of them can be traced to the Ming Dynasty or earlier. The Tiger Hill (Hu-ch‘iu), which is a public park now, is the only one which has a natural setting of massive cliffs and steep gorges. It has a tea house and a slanting pagoda. The other gardens formerly were private and are small. By skillfull use of rocks and water, the designers were able to express nature in a reduced scale (Figures 3-4). Thus, in a small courtyard, one may feel the effect of hills, streams, cliffs and lakes, with plantings to fit with the ecological background.

6. Nanking: Two or three days should be scheduled for Nanking. The CTS program includes the Tomb area of Dr. Sunyatsen, the father of China as a republic. In the vicinity of the Tomb area the
Kiangsu Institute of Agricultural Sciences and the Kiangsu Botanical Institute and the Associated Botanical Garden, situated at the Ming Tomb, are two interesting places to visit. The vegetation of the Spirit Valley is better preserved than is that of the Tomb area, and the group may want to see a deciduous forest of eastern China there. Special requests must be made in advance for visiting the Nanking Technical Institute of Forest Products to see the result of Prof. P. C. Yeh's tree breeding, and the plantings of the medicinal plant gardens of the Nanking College of Traditional Chinese Medicine.

7. Peking: Four or five days should be set aside for Peking. There are many interesting places to see in this ancient city which is also the present capital. Botanically, Peking was the site where Alexander

Fig. 2. The moongate in a Soochow garden.
von Bunge collected in 1830–31. Many of our common ornamental
garden trees and shrubs came from the Peking Hills, originally sent
as seeds to the Arnold Arboretum and several European botanical
gardens by Emil Bretschneider between 1866 and 1883. My time
in Peking was too short to visit the hills. From the Palace ground I
could see beautiful woods on the hills to the north, and also above
the lake area of I Ho Yuan (Garden of Smiling Harmony, also known
as the Summer Palace). My suggestion is that the tour leaders of
botanical groups write to botanists in the Institutum Botanicum,
Academia Sinica, 141 Hsi Chih Men Wai Ta Chie, Peking, for advice.

8–9. Central China. The following information I obtained from
friends who visited Central China in the summer of 1973, and Kweilin
in 1974. Hotel facilities are available for foreign visitors in Wu-
Han (8) of Hupeh Province, and in Chang Sha (9w) in Hunan Prov-
one. People who have inquired about visits to Lu Shan Botanical
Garden may like to know that Wu-Han is the nearest metropolis to
Lu Shan. The name is an abbreviation of two adjacent cities, Wu
Chang and Hankow (Han Kou). Botanists of the Hupeh Institute of
Botany may answer questions about places of botanical interest in
Wu-Han and about arrangements for visiting Lu Shan Botanical
Garden.

Looking at a map of China, one may see that Wu-Han and Chang
Sha are on a central artery of communication between Peking and
Canton. It would be a very interesting trip if arrangements could be
made for leaving Peking by train and stopping at Wu-Han for a few
days, then continuing the trip to Chang Sha by train. After visiting the hometown of Chairman Mao in Hunan, the group could proceed forward to Kweilin (Kwei Lin) in Kwangsi.

10. Kweilin: The natural beauty of Kweilin is well known in China. There is a saying that describes the superb scenery of the area: "The hills and waters of Kweilin is FIRST under heaven." There is a direct flight between Kweilin and Canton. A minimum of two days should be allowed for visiting this area.

Time and Expenses

The expenses of the trip depend primarily upon the time spent in China, and on personal likes and dislikes. Here I can only give my personal experience as a rough reference. I went to China with a Hongkong group (CTS Group 57). This designation was our identification and our address within China. It should be mentioned that when the name of an individual, the group number, and the city within China were given, all mail, telegrams, and long distance telephone calls were received.

In the summer of 1975, a Hongkong dollar was equivalent to US 20 cents; now its value is slightly higher. For the basic expenses of the tour, which was originally scheduled for July 12th (leaving Hongkong in early morning) to August 6th (leaving Canton at 8:20 A.M. and arriving Hongkong about noontime), each member paid in advance $4,000.00HK. This covered transportation, food, hotel (double room), and luggage. Later, our request for an extension of one more day in Peking was granted, and we each paid an additional charge of $100 00HK. The food was good and plentiful, the service excellent, the hotel rooms comfortable and with private baths, and the program full, including many entertainments in the evenings.

Drinks ranging from soft drink to beer, etc., are available in the dining rooms of the hotels at extra charge. In each hotel, there also is a shop for fruits, cigarettes, candy, and small gifts. In every city visited there was a Friendship Store that carried antiques as well as expensive modern articles. Such stores are open only to tourists.

Finally, it should be mentioned that hotel facilities for accommodating foreign visitors are limited in number and capacity. All the overseas Chinese holding passports of their naturalized countries are treated in China as foreign guests. On account of the large number of applications of these people who want to return to see relatives and friends, applicants often have to wait a long time for permission to travel in China. It pays to apply as early as possible and to be patient in waiting for the permit.

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Fig. 3. Soochow garden rock work.