

# IT'S TIME FOR SHARING



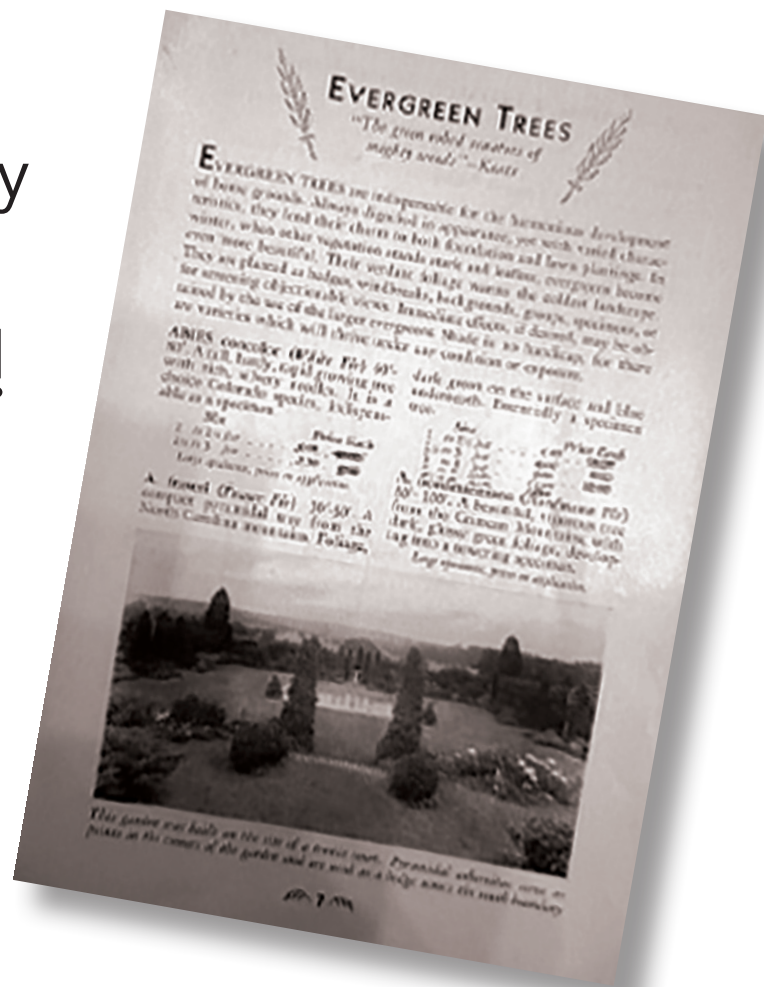
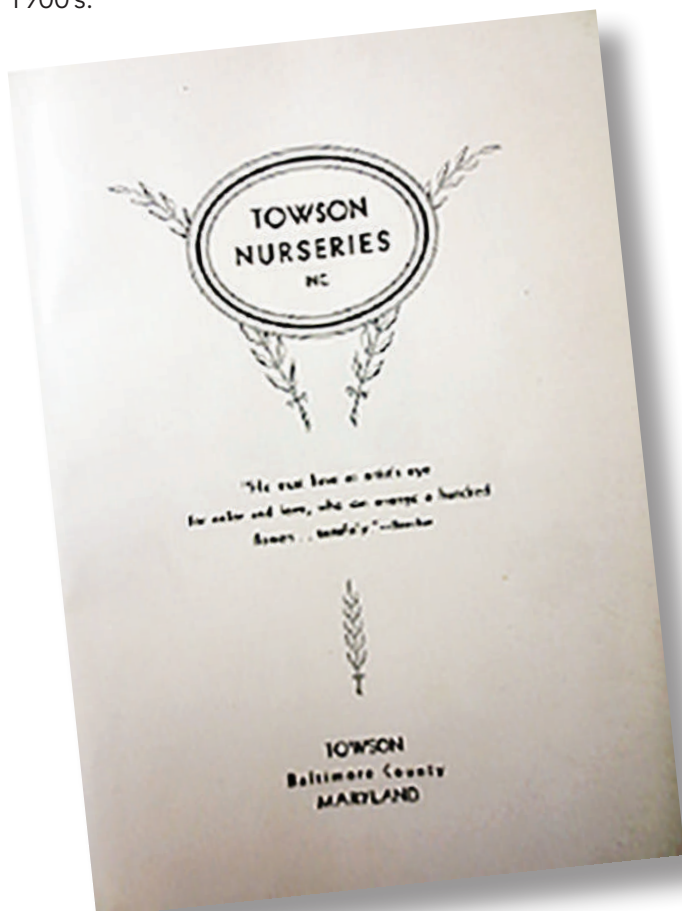
Jerry Faulring

## Plant Prices Stay the Same Since 1930!

This may come as a surprise, but it is relatively true. Several years ago, my good friend Jack Lowry gave me some historical artifacts he accumulated over his long and noteworthy career in the nursery industry.

One of those items, in mint condition is the salesman's catalog of Towson Nursery dated 1930. The President of Towson Nurseries at that time was William Warner Harper. The sales department is listed as Paul S. Hoffman, W. E. Ambrose, Guy M. Stricklen, and W. L. Kone.

Harper was also the owner of Andorra Nursery, Chestnut Hill, Pa. At 1400 acres it was the largest nursery in the east during the late 1800's and early 1900's.



It has a soft but firm fabric jacket. It smells very old. Remember what was going on in 1930? -the really great Depression of 1929. Yet they had the confidence to print an extensive catalog in 1930. I don't know if they printed a new catalog every year. Stapled to the back inside cover is a brief price sheet, well done, for Fall 1931 and Spring 1932.

The catalog contains 150 pages filled with detailed plant descriptions. Many of the plants we still know, and grow are listed. Many have been replaced with new cultivar selections. They list 16 Viburnum, all of which are species. Notably, Viburnum carlessii is still in high demand and was, as is now, the most expensive of the group due to its slow growth.

You are probably familiar with inflation calculators available on the internet. I refer to the site at (<https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>). I use it mostly for fun when I am thinking about how inflation has impacted our world. For example, my starting salary right out of college in 1970 was \$7500.00. I also had a company car, health insurance, and an opportunity to earn additional income from commissioned sales. But

if you enter the \$7500.00 into the calculator for 1970 it will calculate that inflation caused that salary to be about \$49,000.00 today. According to Google, that is about average in 2018.

## What about plant prices?

According to Towson's catalog a 24-30" Viburnum carlesii sold for \$5.00. The CPI calculator says \$74 today. We would sell the plant for \$82 before any allowable discounts.

Towson lists a 4-5' Syringa vulgaris 'Charles Joly' at \$5.00. We list it at \$107.00 before discounts while the CPI calculator says \$74.00.

Other growers will sell the noted plants for much less which usually means a lighter grade.

Towson sold 30-36" Buxus sempervirens for \$12.50; 10 rate. The CPI calculator puts it \$185.00 today. Buxus must have been pretty rare.

Thus, prices adjusted for inflation remain in the same range.

What about costs of doing business? Jack Lowry told me he worked summers at Towson Nursery in 1958 and 1959 and was paid \$1.35 per hour which adjusts to \$11.79 today.

According to the internet, laborers in 1935 earned an average of \$.45 per hour which is \$8.23 per hour today.

A model T Ford cost \$300 in 1935. According to the calculator we should be paying \$5500.00 for the most popular car available today.

It is hard to think about all the other nuances of costs today and in 1930. They dug their plants with shovels. Tractors were engaged in agriculture at the time. John Deere had four models at the time with horsepower ratings of 12 to 14. Irrigation? They probably relied on rainfall.

H2A worker visas? I can only wish we were in business back then.

When we consider how the world has changed regarding government regulation, taxes, health insurance, etc., it seems like our prices should be higher. 🍷

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