Twenty miles south of Mobile, Alabama, near famous Mobile Bay, on Isle-Aux-Oies (Fowl) River, is a garden of dreams called Bellingrath Gardens, conceived because of the love of beauty held by Mr. and Mrs. Walter D. Bellingrath.

In the building of this garden, theirs has been a magician's art. From a wild, untamed land of magnolias, moss draped live and water oaks, bays and pines, they have wrought a spectacular scene of color. Entering its magic portals, one's enchantment grows with every vista and every turn, and a flood of eager questions continue long after the fascinating journey through Charmland has ended.

All because "Once Upon a Time"—there was a man whose love for fishing and congenial companionship led him into a semi-tropical jungle near the junction of three riv-
Walter Bellingrath Is Mobile’s Plenipotentiary of Good Will and Welcome

In his own Shangri-la of gorgeous flowers and musical fountains, which he generously shares with 100,000 other beauty lovers who come to his Gardens each year, lives a man who is Mobile’s Plenipotentiary of Good Will and Welcome.

Almost every visitor who comes to this Seaport City, either in search of business or of pleasure, ultimately arrives at his front door. And because they all see reflected in this man’s personality the character and graciousness of this city an increasing number of industrial smokestacks and residential hearth-stones dot Mobile’s skyline, twenty miles up the bay.

Personal Welcome

Bankers, railroad presidents, steamship officials, lady garden club presidents and even ‘teen age children ask Mr. Bellingrath for a personal welcome for their friends visiting the Gardens. And does this confusion in a paradise made possible by the generosity of this philanthropist disturb him? It certainly does not. He feels humbly proud and privileged, that the young man who first traversed the narrow streets of old Mobile, selling bottled Coca-Cola with a mule and wagon, can now give so much enjoyment to his fellow man.

He likes to walk about the Garden’s sixty acres and, as the big iron bell peals forth its seven o’clock welcome to the morning, he is the first one to step upon the sandy paths which wind their way past one breath-taking floral view after another. Tall and slim, Mr. Bellingrath has an erect carriage and an alertness which belies his age, and no detail is too small for his attention. To most of his friends and to all of the help around the Gardens, he is known as “Mr. Bell.” There is a deep affection between him and the colored gardeners, most of whom have been with him for more than fifteen years.

Planning the Garden

Much of their conversation revolves around the late Mrs. Bessie Morse Bellingrath and the late George B. Rogers, for every spot is a remembrance of these two who had so much to do with the planning and designing of the Gardens. One the wife, and the other a warm friend and eminent architect, they still live in his memories beneath the cathedral of moss draped oaks and in the cool, quiet sanctuaries of the violet-strewed rockeries.

One of the old gardeners likes to remember “Miss Bessie” this way. He tells ever visitor, “Now look back,” and, as the visitor exclaims over each new view of heavenly loveliness, he explains, “This is the way this garden was made. Every now and then Mrs. Bellingrath would say to us, ‘Have all our visitors look back as well as ahead.’”

This old gardener has some wholesome philosophy of his own. He says, “I never thought looking back would do a man much good, but it does in a garden.” Then he’ll chuckle and add, “I wish we could do that with our years. It would be right handy to be able to look back, and go back, and make the ugly places, places of pretty flowers.”

If there are any favorite spots in the Garden for Mr. Bell, they are the ones which overlook the Aisle-aux-Oes (Fowl) River, for the attractiveness of this stream and the fishing therein first brought him to the Mon Louis Island vicinity. Here he built a modest fishing lodge and today this frame building stands with only a flagstone walk-way to the river between it and his palatial brick and iron-laced home. Had Mrs. Bellingrath lived, there was to have been another wing to the house on the site where the fishing lodge stands. Instead, the court, now almost hidden from view by flowers and foliage, continues to mock its pretentious surroundings.

Meeting Guests

When Mr. Bell isn’t walking about the grounds, he is seated in an iron chair with a comfortable curved back and arm rests, which is located beside the house at a focal point in the Garden. Here he can see his guests as they first glimpse the house and the river and then also, it is here that they must pass closest to him.

He likes to engage them in conversation, for people have a fascination for him. Understandably so, because his visitors come from every state in the Union, from many
foreign countries and represent every walk of life.

There was the young couple not so many weeks ago. They were newly-weds and the wife was from Cairo, Egypt. She told Mr. Bellingrath that her husband had courted her while he was a soldier in Cairo and had proposed that if she would marry him, he would take her to Bellingrath Gardens, about which he had talked so much. Thus occurred her belated honeymoon, and she was not disappointed—either in her new American husband or in the glories of the Garden.

**Famed Visitors**

The Superior General of the Holy Family of Nazareth, Rome, has been a visitor, and a British officer from Bombay, India wrote in a Guide’s book, “It is indeed a beautiful spot.” There were guests from Germany and Sweden and Turkey and Lattaque, but a woman from Honolulu, who had visited Japan, captured the attention of all the Garden attendants by her knowledge of Japonica. She said that because the petals of the Camellia Japonica dropped to the ground so quickly after attaining full bloom, they signified “death too soon” and, for this reason, the Japanese people relegated them to cemeteries and generally associated them with sadness. Not so in Mobile, where debutantes and belles wear them in their hair at Mardi Gras first dancings.

**Tributes**

A Hollywood breakfast club has visited the Gardens in a body. Dorothy Dix paid it glowing tribute in print and Jim Farley was a week-end guest. But a woman who wrote from the Tuskegee Negro Institute that she loved flowers so much that she stopped in the Gardens to offer a silent prayer for its founder visibly moved all who read about it. There is no prejudice in the Gardens, where one seems closest to Heaven.

Seeing eye dogs, accompanying their blind masters, are the only pets allowed in the Gardens. Once there were peacocks proudly strutting their plumes about the various pathways. However, when the birds’ appetite for costume jewelry was often misinterpreted for open hostility by unsuspecting women guests, the fantailed residents were forever banished from the Garden of Eden.

Down on Mirror Lake a black swan and a white swan reign supreme and their graceful antics as they swim in the warm sun amuse the visitors who line the rustic bridge to watch. Mr. Bellingrath’s brother, Will, in the early days of the Garden, presented him with a pair of white ones. Later a New York friend added the black pair. One of each gift still survives.

Though Mr. Bell spends most of his days in his Gardens and gives unstintingly of his time to his thousands of guests, he still is actively engaged in the management of several businesses. Of course, Coca-Cola is his first love for it was forty-six years ago that he and his brother, Will, first saw the possibilities of this then unknown carbonated drink, and later on induced their other two brothers in turn to follow them into the business at various other Deep South cities.

Then, as now, he had untiring energy and determination, though his calm and unpretentious air is often misleading. In the early days, he recognized the importance of special events as an opportunity

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ers. Here in 1917 a fishing lodge was established that for ten happy years was the delight of the owner, Mr. Walter D. Bellingrath, and the relatives and friends with whom he shared its pleasures. Then came to Mr. and Mrs. Bellingrath the feeling that this was not enough. The beauty of the spot was so enchanting they began to dream—to dream of banks of glorious flowers along curving trails, of vistas through the stately trees, of thousands of other beauty lovers whom they knew would visit the Charmland they envisioned.

A GARDEN IS BORN—About this time Mr. and Mrs. Bellingrath made a trip to Europe and visited the famous gardens of the Old World. Enthused by the wondrous works of nature and man, upon returning to Mobile they began a more elaborate development of the garden at their city home, still thinking of the Charm Spot twenty miles away. As the Bellingrath City Garden overflowed with Azalea plants, some were removed and transplanted under Mrs. Bellingrath’s direction around the fisherman’s lodge. Thus were the marvelous Bellingrath Gardens born. The effect of flaming Azaleas among the magnolias, bays, cedars, holly, dogwood, stately pines and age-old, moss-draped oaks,
Thousands of varicolored plants add their splendor to the natural loveliness of this semi-tropical lake in the midst of beautiful Bellingrath Gardens.

was so unique that extensive planning and landscaping followed. An American architect, a French landscape gardener, an English landscape engineer, and others were consulted and the development of Bellingrath Gardens became the great ambition of Mr. and Mrs. Bellingrath. The vision grew as the months, and then the years, passed; they traveled far and wide to see other gardens, always searching for ideas and further inspiration for the development of their own garden spot.

Came the day one Sunday in the Spring of 1932 that Mr. and Mrs. Bellingrath issued a cordial invitation to Mobilians to visit Bellingrath Gardens and enjoy with them the glamorous beauty of giant Azaleas in full bloom. The response was so astonishing that an appeal had to be made for traffic officers to untangle the traffic jam that extended for miles on the highway leading to the Gardens.

OPENED TO THE PUBLIC — Following this demonstration of the public’s desire to see Bellingrath Gardens, it was found necessary to make an admission charge in order to control the vast crowds that thronged the estate. And, though started as a hobby to be enjoyed by its owners and their friends, Bellingrath Gardens has become the mecca of flower lovers from all over the world. Today, it seems incredible that this world-famous garden was started less than a generation ago, for it contains stately live oaks that have stood 500 years, huge trees of many kinds. Scattered over its many

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Throughout the Gardens the many flowers join the natural beauty of moss-covered oaks to enhance the beauty of skillful masonry.

The flavor of the Old World is brought to the banks of Isle-Aux-Oies River by the Bellingrath home, focal point of the Gardens.
For almost two hundred years there have been Azaleas in Mobile, appreciated and admired by those who have seen them. In the middle of the Seventeenth Century Fifiene Langlois, returning to Mobile from a visit to his childhood home in Toulouse, France, brought three colors of Azaleas to Mobile. From that time on we find the Azaleas woven into the pattern of Mobile’s history. When France ceded Mobile to England in 1763, visitors came to see the Azaleas; and in 1770 when the Spaniards took Mobile they marvelled at the glory of these flowers. Since the turn of the Nineteenth Century some of the bushes planted about the middle of the Eighteenth Century have become almost trees, towering fifteen to twenty feet in height and measuring over a hundred feet in circumference. Many of these century-old bushes have been brought into Bellingrath Gardens, where they are zealously guarded for this and other generations to enjoy and admire. Azaleas grow in many parts of the world, but for variety, size, colors, arrangement and natural setting, the gorgeous Azaleas in Bellingrath Gardens are unequalled. When the Azalea bush is in full bloom every vestige of foliage is entirely smothered in the crimson, coral, white or purple flowers that the bush may bear.

Gardeners work year-round in the greenhouses to prepare plants for transplanting to the beds in the Gardens.

Maintaining Year-Round Natural Beauty Requires Expert Attention By Gardeners

Constant Care Assures Continuous Scenic Wonder

To maintain a garden of this magnitude entails employment throughout the entire year of about 40 trained gardeners under the supervision of the executive heads and their staff. As the seasons come and go, plants from the service greenhouses and lath houses are transplanted into beds throughout the garden to provide an ever-changing glamor of color to enhance the landscape.

Over 25,000 small Kurume Azaleas are moved back to the lath houses as they pass out of flower. These are replanted with the colorfully foliaged Crotons. Thousands of the beautiful fancy-leaved Caladiums, borders of the gamorous yellow Allamanda, and over 200 large Galleyway vases are changed from the Azaleas to Dracaena and Pandanus and the red foliage Acalypha. A thousand Boston ferns are required to embellish vases. Again in April 2,000 African Violets are planted in the nooks of the rockeries. Together with thousands of Baby Table Ferns, a large bank of the small white Azaleas across the lake is replanted with 2,000 scarlet Salvia affording a constant blaze of color from May to Christmas.

Hundreds upon hundreds of a fine collection of Hibiscus are also brought from the green houses early in April and planted in prominent places in the garden, a never ending source of interest and joy, the whole summer through.

The lily pools in the rose garden are built with the finest collection of tropical day water lilies procurable, many flowers of which are from 9 to 12 inches across. These are just a few of the many changes which go on from month to month giving one a slight idea of work involved and

Garden Manager Has Wide Experience

A. A. Hunt, Landscape Engineer at Bellingrath Gardens, daily supervises 40 gardeners and attendants, and in cooperation with Mr. Walter D. Bellingrath, designs the gorgeous floral displays which give the gardens their year-round beauty.

When the Camellias begin to bloom in Bellingrath Gardens, starting in September, lasting into April, and reaching the height of their profusion during January and February, each week brings forth a new spectacle, a continual parade of changing colors to enchant the visitor. And long before the Camellia show is over the Azaleas burst forth in all their glory, color and profusion, starting generally about the middle of February and lasting over a period of several weeks.

Throughout the entire blooming season of the Camellias and Azaleas the Sweet Olive fills the air in Bellingrath with its fragrance. In the late Spring the Mountain Laurel, Dogwood, and the double-flowered Spirea brighten up the woods with their delicate blossoms.

In May the Gardens are resplendent with the colorful Hydrangea and the fragrant Gardenia. These are followed during the summer months by the Crepe Myrtle, Oleander, Magnolia, Hibiscus, Allamanda and numerous other colorful flowers that make the Gardens a dream of beauty, each month different and possessing a charm of its own.

The casual visitor to the Gardens frequently fails to realize the planning and work that go into maintaining the natural beauty of this Charm Spot of the Deep South. It is Mr. Hunt’s training and experience that transform Mr. Belling-
for increasing sales. He would deliver fifteen or twenty cases of Coca-Cola to the baseball field and give away coupons to the fans. Usually he brought half of the Coca-Cola back to the plant and after the game would return to the park and collect the coupons which many of the fans had not used and had thrown away. His selling technique was perfected during the five years preceding his first Coca-Cola franchise when he was a successful wholesale merchandise broker.

Progressive, he was the first bottler to install a low-pressure system, a daring venture at the time, and was the first to inaugurate a bottle deposit. His truck fleet was the first motorized Coca-Cola delivery service in Alabama.

Today he is still the bold progressive business man. While he sits beside the cascading pool in his shady patio chatting with guests, his mind is exploring new possibilities of progress in all of his other affiliate businesses. Besides being President of the Mobile Coca-Cola Bottling Company, he is President of the Lerro Corporation, manufacturers of truck bodies and naval stores supplies; President of the Mobile Warehousing Company; Vice-President of the Coca-Cola Bottling, Frisco City, Alabama; a Director of the First National Bank of Mobile, and a Director of the Mobile Press-Register. He is also a charter member of the Mobile Rotary Club.

In maintaining this home and in the entertainment of his many guests he is assisted by his gracious and charming Secretarial Hostess, Mrs. Euen Lehmborg.

First Job

When the day is ended he likes to sit with his close personal friends, on his big open porch facing his beloved river. If urged a bit, he'll get out his prized victrola record, "I'm Going Back Where I Came From," and will sing and whistle a pretty good accompaniment. Possibly he is thinking about the first job he ever had, working for the Louisville and Nashville Railroad in Castleberry, Alabama when he was seventeen. He was a General Agent, he says—"General Ticket Agent, General Baggage Agent, General Porter, and General Flunkie."

Or perhaps he is thinking about how, after a hard day's work at the Coca-Cola plant, he and Mrs. Bellingrath would plan and dream of the Garden they were creating on the banks of the Aisleaux-Oies River.

There is a poem deep in the heart of Mr. Bellingrath which he often quotes:

"The kiss of the sun for pardon
The songs of the birds for mirth
One is nearer God's Heart in a Garden
Than anywhere else on earth."

The Camellia Japonica has no equal in the plant world for its beauty and fitness for the glorification of the home and garden. A native of the Orient, it was introduced through European channels to Mobile about one hundred years ago. Possibly some five or six hundred varieties exist, and during the past 10 years hundreds of specimen Camellia Japonica plants, in amazing variety, have been gathered from the yards of private homes and nurseries throughout the South and transplanted with exceeding care into Bellingrath Gardens. The visitor is quickly convinced that here is one of the most remarkable collections of this beautiful flowering shrub ever gathered together anywhere.

No other plant can give such a diversity of types and colors. Pure white, through every shade of pink to deep red and crimson, ending with some blooms having a decided purplish cast. Singles, semi-doubles, peony flowering types, some with dense pompon centers, others shaggy flowers with center petals whirled and twisted, full doubles of every conceivable type. Again some varieties are solid colors, others have variegation through the petals; some are mottled, others are striped. To the visitor the lovely Camellia is a never-ending source of delight.

Each year many tourists and conducted tour parties utilize the Gulf, Mobile & Ohio's excellent facilities to view the year-round beauty of these flowers.

GM&O's streamlined offer overnight service from St. Louis and 23-hour service from Chicago.

Constant care and spraying assure freedom from insects and disease. Here one of the gardeners sprays Azaleas.

In the lath houses, Azaleas await transplanting into the hundreds of beds in the Gardens.
"Charm Spot of the Deep South"

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acres are thousands of Azalea bushes, some over 15 feet high, all of which have been transplanted in this natural setting; and thousands of trees, shrubs, plants and vines were brought in from everywhere. One may linger for hours along shady vistas opening into broad, sunny acres of grass, and find in every moment a new thrill in brilliant bloom or verdant foliage, or in reflection of tranquil lake and river. Only a few years ago a tropical jungle where Mr. Bellingrath built his small, river-bank fishing lodge, here now some 40 men are at work throughout the year, planting, pruning, watering, and feeding. This "Charm Spot of the Deep South" now embraces more than 800 acres of ground, about 60 acres of which have been remarkably landscaped and developed into a beautiful and fascinating Garden beyond adequate description.

Gardens Manager

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rath's dream of natural perfection into a real and living floral wonder.

Landscape Engineer Hunt has been in this country for 43 years. After serving the four-year apprenticeship which entitled Europeans to the title of Landscape Engineer, Mr. Hunt worked for 11 years on estates and Gardens in England, the latter part of his work taking place in the famous Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew.

Following his work in these gardens he came to the United States and worked all over the nation, from Washington to Florida and from Maine to California.

Several years before coming to Bellingrath the English Engineer was employed by the State of Louisiana and laid out the grounds of Louisiana State University and the State Capitol.

As General Manager of Bellingrath Gardens Mr. Hunt has aided Mr. Bellingrath immeasurably in transforming a wilderness into one of the nation's most beautiful gardens.

Maintenance

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which would not be possible were it not for the loyalty and excellent service rendered by the gardeners who have been constantly employed since the garden was started years ago.

They all feel, and rightly so, their ownership with Mr. Bellingrath in the garden they have learned to love. Constant and vigilant care from day to day is required. Systematic pruning, watching and spraying for insect pests and diseases, fertilizing, watering, keeping all walks and driveways swept and raked daily and multitudinous duties necessary to keep a garden properly groomed throughout the entire year.