

## **A Blooming in the Bronx**

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The greening of New York is late this year—except in the Bronx, a place hardly synonymous with spring in the public mind. There the season is in full bloom at the restored Conservatory of the New York Botanical Garden.

Called "one of the most elegant buildings in the world" when it opened in 1901, the Conservatory's 90-foot-high dome and eleven linked glass "houses" made it a worthy successor to the London Crystal Palace and the Great Palm House at Kew. In recent years it had fallen into decay, like other areas near its Bronx Park setting. By 1970, demolition of the vandalized structure seemed inevitable, and when restoration was planned in 1972, it was merely an optimistic gesture. By 1975, the city's proposed contribution went the way of all capital expenditures.

But the generosity of a private benefactor, Enid Haupt,

and the skill of the architect, Edward Larabee Barnes, have now given New Yorkers a renewed cultural resource that is also an anchor of amenity for the Bronx. Carlton Lees, a horticulturist who believes that people-plant relationships are real, has filled the restored building with a mix of sheer beauty and subtle education. One leaves city streets for fern forests and desert environments; 70 varieties of palms and clouds of orchids are massed under the dramatic latticed dome. A Children's Greenworld has "please touch" plants that show the source of food and the miracle of growth.

There is bombed-out blacktop not far away, but here one is surrounded by the scent of damp earth and flowers and the quiet serenity of gardens under glass. The Conservatory is green balm for the city soul and, like spring, a sign of hope.

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