



ESCUELA AGRICOLA PANAMERICANA
TEGUCIGALPA HONDURAS

MONTHLY NEWS LETTER

SEPTEMBER 1952: Many surprises are encountered in tropical agriculture and horticulture. For example, when we planted the Pili nut from the Philippines we had little hope that it would succeed here, since it comes from a wet tropical forest region. We have two rows of these trees along the drive through our nursery area. They are nine years old, and while their growth has been much slower than at Lancelilla Experiment Station on the north coast of Honduras - a region with 150 to 200 inches of rainfall annually - they have continued to develop and are in bearing. When Dr. Elmer D. Merrill, dean of American botanists, who lived many years in the Philippines, first saw these trees a few years ago he felt somewhat like the farmer who for the first time saw a giraffe in the zoo: "There ain't no such animal".

Asparagus is another example: We had always thought this excellent vegetable could only be grown in the tropics at relatively high elevations - 5000 feet or more, Professor John MacGillivray of the College of Agriculture, University of California, who spent some time with us in the summer of 1949, brought with him some asparagus seeds which we planted in nursery form. We expected that we would grow these plants for two years, transplant them to the field, and the following year begin to harvest asparagus - as is done in the United States. At nine months of age the plants were producing seeds and we could not stand the temptation any longer, so we cut some of them back to the ground, and harvested and ate the young spears which soon appeared. They were not as large as the Jumbo grade of canned asparagus from California, but they were of excellent quality. After cutting spears for a month, we let the plants develop once more, and a few months later repeated the performance. We have been doing this ever since. How many years we can continue the procedure remains to be seen, but up to now we are having all the asparagus we want. Probably the yield is not great enough to make asparagus culture commercially profitable, but the quality of the product remains excellent.

Another surprise has been the behavior of Fontana wheat, which we obtained through the courtesy of Ing. Cesar Abad, Director of the Escuela Práctica de Agricultura at Daule, near Guayaquil, Ecuador. Wheat is not supposed to be grown at this altitude in the tropics. In colonial times it was cultivated at higher elevations in several parts of Central America, especially in Guatemala, where it is still produced commercially at altitudes of 6000 feet and higher. Fontana gave us good production last winter and we now have a fine stand coming on. It is not yet to be assumed that commercial wheat growing is feasible at this elevation, but the experiment is highly interesting.

On September 29th Dr and Mrs. Ernest H. Casseres visited the School. Dr Casseres is Field Crop Specialist of the Inter-American Institute of Agricultural Sciences in Turrialba, Costa Rica. Dr Casseres has been in Mexico studying potato production of these countries with a view of improving same. He gave a very interesting kodachrome illustrated talk to the students and staff on potato cultivation.

Other prominent visitors: Dr Oscar Arce of the Instituto de Investigaciones Agrícolas of Mexico; Sr y Sra. Antonio Collart of the Banco Nacional de Fomento of Honduras; Dr C. Delgado, Minister of Economy of Nicaragua; Dr Diego M. Sequeira, Ambassador of Nicaragua; Minister of France to Honduras and Mme. Colonna-Césari; Minister of the Dominican Republic and Sra de Paniagua; and Sra doña Lucia Torres de Zuleta of Colombia.