

John Milton Fogg, Jr., Director of Morris Arboretum 1954-1967

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From the time he enrolled in Penn's Student Army Training Corps in 1918, John Milton Fogg, Jr. made an impact at the University of Pennsylvania, first by earning a superior grade point average, then being chosen a botany department assistant and elected to Phi Beta Kappa. On graduation he remained at Penn as a botany instructor and after completing the Ph.D., earned three promotions to full professor. During his teaching career, Fogg demonstrated leadership abilities that resulted in his appointment as Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, then Vice Provost and later, Director of Morris Arboretum.

Fogg was an expert in botanical taxonomy and an accomplished plant collector. While serving as the Arboretum's taxonomist in 1933, he documented the plant species at Compton and Bloomfield—an early project in his career-long study of floristics. The project culminated in 1979 with publication of an atlas of Pennsylvania flora in collaboration with Herbert Wahl and senior author Edgar T. Wherry. Two of Fogg's research accomplishments in later years stand out: his field studies of flowering plants of Mexico and his registry of magnolia cultivars, which led to establishing the American Magnolia Society.

When Fogg became Director of Morris Arboretum in 1954, he laid out three priorities—research, public relations and education. To assist in these efforts, he gained board approval to replace the Penn administrative committee with a broad-based advisory council—the first reorganization since the Arboretum was established. The 24-member council included John J. Willaman, George D. Widener, Henry F. du Pont, Laura L. Barnes, Elizabeth H. Greenfield and Marion Rivinus, serving as chair. During their initial years, the council authorized a discretionary fund to support projects related to Fogg's priorities and led a major membership drive resulting in a five-fold increase in new associates.

While he was Director, Fogg continued to teach and conduct research. He lectured on plant evolution and historical geology in Penn's landscape architecture program and served as botanical consultant for E.R. Squibb, traveling to India and Southeast Asia researching medicinal plants. On one expedition, he invited two botanists from India to work with the Arboretum for a year as consultants on medicinal plants. Soon after, Fogg secured a grant to install a medicinal plant garden, expanded over time to 300 hardy and tropical species. The garden attracted the public's interest and became a valuable resource for medical and pharmaceutical students in the Philadelphia area.

One of the most important education initiatives launched by the Arboretum under Fogg's leadership was a graduate course in botany offered through the University's summer school. Initially, the course enrolled Penn students; in subsequent years enrollment included high school teachers on NSF scholarships. A second botany course, emphasizing plant recognition and ecological factors, was added for landscape architecture students. The summer program ran for thirteen years, with Fogg instructing the class on woody plants.

Fogg's education initiatives also included non-credit classes and annual tours of botanical gardens for Arboretum associates. The first tour was scheduled to coincide with the International Horticultural Exhibition in Vienna in 1964. The group of thirty, including several associates of the Barnes Foundation Arboretum, spent three weeks exploring horticultural sites in Austria, Germany, Holland, Belgium and France. With the overwhelming success of the first tour, Fogg organized a tour the following year to gardens in Spain, Portugal, the Canary Islands and Andorra. In 1966, the group toured gardens in New England and New York; then in Fogg's final year as Director, the destination was botanic gardens in the United Kingdom.

Midway through his tenure as Director, Fogg wrote a salient article on the purposes of an arboretum, in answer to the question: what does an arboretum offer disparate groups of people such as scientists, conservationists, teachers, bird-lovers, home-owners and landscape architects. Fogg presented a convincing rationale to each group and concluded with these words, "If, in all of this, I seem to have conveyed the impression that I consider an arboretum to be an integral and indispensable part of our culture, then I have done what I set out to do."

When Fogg was granted the title Director Emeritus, he did not retire. Rather, he assumed the directorship of the Arboretum of the Barnes Foundation, where, almost thirty years earlier, he assisted Laura Barnes in establishing the Foundation's horticulture school.

Learn more:

Roy Hill, Elizabeth B. Farley & Helen B. Fogg, "John Milton Fogg, Jr." *Bartonia*, No. 49 (1983) 15-19. [Archive.org](#).

"Society's Founders," *Magnolia*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (1976) 27-29. [Magnoliasociety.org](#).