

Gulfshore Life®

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A PASSION FOR PLANTS

Four landmark Southwest Florida Gardens

Our Singing Sands

FRANK MANN

A Local Politician's Politician

FLIGHTS OF FANCY

Butterfly Gardens—the Latest in Landscaping

Vintage 1998

Sarasota's Winefest, Taste of Naples and the best of spring in Southwest Florida





HORTICULTURAL TRAILBLAZER

Blame Allen Andrews for the melaleuca. Yes, this member of a turn-of-the-century cult was probably the person most responsible for introducing the invasive Australian tree to Southwest Florida. But as abhorrent and short-sighted as it might seem to be now, the man's intentions were good—born, in fact, of scientific curiosity and a love for Southwest Florida.

Andrews was the editor of the *American Eagle*, the newspaper published by the Koreshans, who had come to Estero to establish the "New Jerusalem," a heaven on earth that would include paradisaical gardens. Allen included a great deal of horticultural writing in his paper; one of his regular columnists was Dr. Henry Nehrling, whose work Andrews eventually gathered into the two-volume *My Garden in Florida*.

Quick to make friends and establish a network of relationships, Andrews also forged a bond with Thomas Edison, and the two supported each other's interest in horticultural experimentation, trading seeds and insights back and forth. Cuttings from Edison's trees often made their way into Koreshan soil and vice versa. Andrews shared Edison's passion for discovery and the cultivation of new plants, so when he learned of the melaleuca's ability to grow in exceedingly wet places, he supposed it might be helpful for draining the state's swamps and wetlands. It was he who imported the first tiny melaleuca seeds.

"Though with some years of actual contact and experience with tropical plants, I had no technical training, and my ignorance often far exceeded my enthusiasm," he later wrote.

But Andrews also had a great deal to do with the still-enchanting gardens that surround the now-extinct group's settlement on the banks of the Estero River. From lush sunken gardens to exotic fruit trees, he helped fill the tough daily life of these pioneers with fragrance, flavor and beauty. ■

DAVID VAN ZANTEN

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Koreshan, Taniami Trailblazer, and ardent amateur horticulturalist, Allen Andrews, helped fill the gardens of the Koreshan State Historic Site, at U.S. 41 and Gorkserew Road, with exotic plants such as this monkey puzzle tree, one of the largest specimens in the U.S. For information call 992-0311.