



—Manuel Martinez Photo

Wilbur Bradley, left, the "gourd king," entertains visiting scouts Robert Davies, 9, Doug Williams, 12, and Duane Hall, 9, on his National City gourd farm.

CROP THRIVES

The Gourd Farm Attracts Fans

By LARRY FREEMAN

NATIONAL CITY — Without benefit of government subsidy he has reduced his acreage until there are only a couple of small patches of a crop left but Wilbur Bradley still calls it "The Gourd Farm."

It is also one of the most visited "farms" in the county, especially noteworthy because it is inside a city.

Bradley estimates that last year about 4,000 to 5,000 persons came to visit his farm, and finger the variety of shapes and sizes among the thousands of gourds he handles.

MANY VISITORS

Most of his visitors are children. Some come in school buses, making a field trip out of the visit. They include kindergarten children, other elementary school students, Cub Scouts, Campfire Girls, Blue Birds, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and Sunday school groups.

Bradley formerly had about 12,000 gourd plants on two acres of ground on slopes behind his home at 170 East 31st St., National City.

He cut production to a couple of small patches for exhibition purposes because business became so good.

He found he couldn't both raise gourds and process and sell them.

Now he contracts with Felix Garnsey of De Luz and the Bates Brothers, nut growers and dealers in Valley Center, to grow his gourds.

CROP FAILURE

Bradley got into the gourd business in 1955 at the urging of county fair officials. That year he sold 2,000 gourds. He says he could sell as many as 50,000 this year if he could get that many.

His output has risen steadily since 1955, except last year when a crop failure cut his supply to 10,000 gourds.

As far as Bradley knows there is only one other commercial gourd producer in

Southern California, and probably the state.

In 1959-60 he found a grower in Pacoima, in the Los Angeles area, who planted three acres of gourds and agreed to supply all Bradley would take at 9 cents each. Bradley hauled about 30,000 of them, 2,000 each load, from Pacoima to National City.

That move put him over as the reputed "Gourd King" of Southern California.

Harold Pearson of El Monte, whose gourd operation was destroyed by fire last year, sold Bradley 5,000 at five cents each in 1956, as interest in the decorative and functional gourd expanded.

Gourds are grown from seed, hybridize themselves in the field, thus creating a variety of sizes and shapes. One of the prized varieties comes from Peru, and is called the "canteen" because of its shape.

VARIETY OF USES

Bradley's gourds, painted or dyed, or even uncolored, are made into cookie jars, planters (waterproofed), bird houses, bird feeders, decorative penguins, flamingos (out of the so-called fish gourd), handbags, puppets, Santa Clauses, and whales among other things. He turns some out in these shapes, but the buyer sometimes makes his own.

One of Bradley's newest and heaviest demands is for wholesale quantities of gourds to be shipped to Hawaii where they are used by hula dancers as ipus, the drum-like instrument used for background rhythm.

Bradley was for many years a member of the Sweetwater Union High School District board, worked during the World War I era as a chemist at the now abandoned Hercules Powder plant on the tidelands at the north end of Chula Vista, and was chemist in charge of a citrus products plant in National City later.

A
Res
New
Att

Res
of Cali
culture
have u
the fig
mites,
have
Califor

At
meeting
present
cide ap
feed o
disease

Marv
Califor
erside
mated
tributed
1968 to

In Sa
O. Ros
here, s
tacked
on leav
fruit.

CONCE

Rosec
tion of
cording
He said
serious
cause
here.

Dr. L
logist a
the grow
the prob
that gr
populati
spraying

Rosed
Diego C
— a mi
control

"Actu
less m
mites,"
phone
rial use
not dam
ators th

Rosed
of red r
ing of t
The leav
tion ca

"Diebac
conditio
twigs or
off due
sap is s

"The
symptom
home-ov
said Ro
NOT ON

Some
mites o
the fruit
worth,
well be

"They
fresh
"House
aged fr
terior d

There
of citru
County,
the cou
culture,
is one o
citrus g
problem

Snails
and lea
said Ro
red or b
as do ru

Turning On The Spring