

Old school to house nursery center

THE old red school house in Catharpin will become a commercial Garden Center in March, owned by John Norman of Haymarket and operated by Charles Peccora of Aldie, former gardner for Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon of Upperville.

Peccora said the garden center will offer everything from seeds, transplants, hanging baskets, and fertilizer to pesticide, shrubs and trees. In addition to gardening supplies and equipment, customers can get professional help with landscaping, Peccora said.

The school house will be moved back on the lot several yards, to provide more room for parking and a new foundation with full basement. The building is in pretty good structural shape, Peccora said, but it will be painted and spruced up. Greenhouses and lath houses will be added. There's a good chance that owner John Norman may obtain the original bell to hang in the cupola, Peccora said.

Charles Peccora thinks the time is right to start a new garden center in western Prince William. "When times are not so good, people turn toward horticulture. They don't go away from home as much, so they spend more time with their own lawn and garden."



The old Catharpin School will become a "garden center" in March. Charles Peccora, former gardner for Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon, will be in charge.

PECCORA has the professional expertise to operate a garden and landscape center. He was the chief gardner for the Paul Mellons for 18 years. When he left

the Mellons, in 1973, Mrs. Mellon wrote a letter of recommendation which reads: "Charles Peccora is among the best professional gardeners of our time. His know-

ledge of growing things and administration makes him capable of working in all horticultural fields."

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At the Mellons, Peccora was in charge of a staff of 16 permanent gardeners and eight boys for summer help. He was responsible for "the growing greenhouses, a snow greenhouse, a formal English walled garden, extensive lawns, orchards, espalier hedges, vegetable and fruit gardens and cut flower gardens." He also helped Mrs. Mellon establish wildflowers in the woods on the estate.

With Mrs. Mellon, Charles Peccora worked on the White House Rose Garden, the Jacqueline Kennedy Garden and White House floral arrangements during the Kennedy and Johnson years.

Charles Peccora and his wife Kit, (whom he met while both of them were apprentices at the New York Botanical Gardens) have visited private gardens, Botanical

Gardens and parks in eight countries, while they were employed by the Mellons.

AFTER leaving Upperville, Peccora became grounds manager at Hillwood in Washington, D. C., the estate of the late Mrs. Majorie Merriweather Post which became a part of the Smithsonian Institution after her death. But Peccora's position was eliminated after funds for maintaining the estate were reduced. That's when he found out John Norman was looking for someone to operate a garden center in the old Catharpin School.

Norman already owned some gardening equipment and had a small staff. He developed Evergreen Country Club Estates and had started his limited gardening business to serve buyers in that subdivision who wanted to have

their lawns planted and landscaped. Norman has owned the old Catharpin School for sometime and decided that would be a good location for a garden center. There's quite a potential market with all the new houses in western Prince William, Peccora said.

Americans are paying more attention to gardening, Peccora said, but not as much as Europeans. He remembered visiting a pub,

during one of the trips he made to England while employed for the Mellons, and hearing several local pub customers having quite a discussion over who grew the finest roses, who had the earliest crop of peas or the neatest rows. That preoccupation with gardening is perhaps a way off in the future for this country, Charlie Peccora plans to do his part to direct things that way.—Pekay Pettus