As the world population increases, more people are choosing to make their homes in the desert environments throughout the world. As new population centers develop, there is a great demand for city parks, golf courses, and other recreation areas. The landscaping of new home sites and all types of recreation areas require large quantities of plant nutrients for their successful establishment and maintenance. Interest in home gardening is at its highest level since the Victory Garden Era of World War II. Victory Gardens were encouraged to offset the shortages in commercial production, processing, and transportation of fruits and vegetables during the war years. The current high interest in home gardening is attributed to the increasing cost of food which has resulted from higher energy and labor costs in producing, processing, and transporting food. In urban areas, next door neighbors often do not get acquainted with each other. However, if neighbors have home gardens, they have much in common to talk about, to share, to compare, and to exchange in terms of information, ideas, plant materials, products, successes, and failures. The present interest in home landscaping and gardening has created a great demand for plant nutrients in desert environments and also in humid regions (Hayes 1977).

19.1 Plants in the Living Environment to Lift the Spirits of Man

Our view of the earth from a car window in many cities shows land with most of the natural vegetation removed. Spaces are filled with buildings, roads, and construction machinery. Any open areas are tan and gray-colored, or blacktopped and covered with cars. Green plants are forgotten in this landscape and the few plants that are present grow with great difficulty. This need not be the vista confronting people in their cities, or wherever they live and work. We must set new priorities for land use and create new landscapes with the many uses of green plants. We must educate the new generations to the benefits of having plants in their lives. Green plants in the countryside seem so simple and abundant. They appear to grow everywhere and survive all kinds of changes. Under the protection and comforts of indoor living we forget the ruthlessness of the outdoors. We
retain only the memories of the balmy days of late spring and the chilling nights of fall. Plants growing in our landscapes are adapted to survive in changing environments (Black et al. 1970).

A farmer knows how suddenly the weather can change. An emerging crop of seedlings or a field of maturing produce can be wiped out in minutes. Thunderstorms, driving rains, and abrupt changes in temperatures are considered natural calamities. Much of the information on the function of plants is lost prior to reaching people. Most people know that plants are a counterpart of animals. They remember vaguely that, if the two types of organisms are combined in the proper manner, plants will provide for the support of animals and vice versa.

Green plants that are introduced into a town or city have many advantages over their counterparts in the wild. We can select plants from a specific clone instead of randomly picking them from a seedling population. We can train plants for transplanting to a specific site. We can position plants in their own especially selected urban micro-climate. If all of the interests of plant scientists and gardeners were focused on adapting plants to urban environments, plants may lift the spirits of mankind in the future family environment (Hayes 1972).

19.2 Home Gardens Reduce Food Costs, Landscape Homesteads, and Improve Neighborliness

Home gardens may be grown successfully in full sun and away from tree roots. Only a few garden sites are free from the shade cast by walls, fences, or trees, and are also free from foraging tree roots. Thus, gardening often becomes an exercise in compromise, where people learn to live with site-imposed restrictions and settle for somewhat less than optimum garden performance and yield.

Home gardeners should look beyond the traditional concept of a single plot as a vegetable and/or fruit garden. Frequently, two or more small plots have advantages over a single garden. Small plots are also easier to dress-up with flowers to make them blend into the general homestead landscape. If space permits, a separate orchard and berry plot is preferred over a combination garden and orchard and berry plot. Toxic pest control sprays from fruit trees and berries may drip on vegetables. In addition, certain kinds of berries spread aggressively and invade nearby rows of vegetables. Site selection for fruit or nut trees is more critical than it is for vegetables, berries, and bush fruits because orchards are not portable. One cannot move an orchard around like a vegetable garden. The location of fruit or nut trees and the form, flower, and foliage color of the varieties chosen may have a significant impact on the homestead landscape. Fruit, nut, and citrus trees change in size and form as they mature. During the winter months,