

KAMU gardening show goes national



By Cathie Feighl

Battalion Reporter

KAMU-TV is now sending plant and gardening tips across the nation with its first nationally broadcast show.

The locally-produced show, entitled "The Plant Kingdom," is now available to all U.S. public broadcasting stations in the country, said Rodger Lewis, program director at KAMU-TV.

The half-hour home horticulture show features a variety of ideas and information for the care of plants and gardens.

Lewis said the first of six episodes seen via satellite was aired Jan. 14, and the remaining shows will be seen weekly through Feb. 18. He said his goal is for "The Plant Kingdom" to be broadcast 52 times a year, but this cannot be achieved until an underwriter is found to assume part of production costs.

"The Plant Kingdom" presents information regarding new developments in gardening and landscaping and offers "common sense" advice on growing everything from vegetables to flowers, Lewis said.

The show is hosted by Dr. Homer Blackhurst, retired professor of horticulture at Texas A&M University, who has been in horticulture all of his 69 years.

"We are concerning all phases of horticulture — everything that is needed for successful gardening," Blackhurst said. One of his favorite show topics is soil preparation and fertilization, he said, because it is neglected by most gardeners.

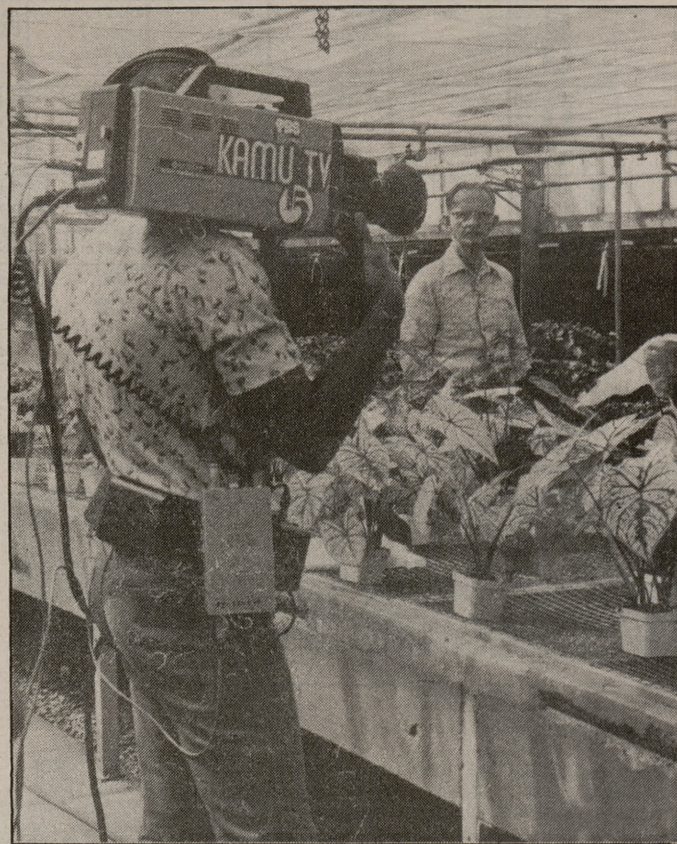
Blackhurst said he uses the expertise of Texas A&M's experiment and extension staffs as a major source in explaining to audiences how gardens should be prepared for different kinds of weather.

Lewis said there is a need for a southern-oriented gardening program and he is glad the show can now be seen in other states. The four pilot episodes of "The Plant Kingdom" shown last summer received such tremendous audience response that public broadcasting stations in Texas and other states agreed to air the six new episodes this spring, Lewis said.

"We have the largest college of agriculture in the country here at A&M, so if there is going to be a quality home agriculture program produced anywhere in the country, it should be here," Lewis said.

All the programs are produced on location with the KAMU-TV mobile unit. "The Plant Kingdom" is broadcast weekly Tuesday at 1 p.m., Thursday at 7:30 p.m. and Saturday at 3:30 p.m.

Dr. Homer Blackhurst explains different types of soils used in gardening, right. Soil preparation and fertilizers are some of Blackhurst's favorite topics. Below, a KAMU-TV cameraman films one of the episodes of "The Plant Kingdom." The program is shot entirely on location, and is shown three times a week on Channel 15 as well as being available nationwide on public television.



FOCUS ON: REVIEWS

'Hangar 18': alien's rocky horror

By Kathleen McElroy

Battalion Staff

Remember "Chariots of the Gods?" It's the movie that asks whether "extraterrestrial beings" — i.e., aliens from another world — visited Earth many moons ago and helped man gain the knowledge needed to construct roads and stage Super Bowls.

And what about "Close Encounters of the Third Kind," (any edition will do) in which the government secretly but gracefully greeted little men from outer space?

Somewhere in between those two movies is "Hangar 18," which borrows themes from both. It's not as hokey as "Chariots of the Gods?" but because of bad dialogue and poor execution, it's not as emotional as "Close Encounters."

The first problem is the prologue which says that "Thanks to the efforts of a few brave eyewitnesses ... this story can finally be told." Even the

adolescents in the theater, for whom this movie was obviously written, snickered at those lines.

"Hangar 18" opens with a shot of the U.S. shuttlecraft cradling what is soon to be man's first satellite launched from space. Unfortunately, after the likes of "The Empire Strikes Back" and even "Flash Gordon," the shuttlecraft looks like a Mattel toy space rocket suspended precariously by dental floss.

Inside our shuttle are the astronauts/heroes Bancroft and Price, played by veteran television actors Gary Collins and James Hampton. They are wrongly blamed for the death of another astronaut who is decapitated in space when the launched satellite rams into an Unidentified Flying Object.

They can't understand why the government would make them scapegoats until they discover all proof of the UFO has been erased because an evil

presidential advisor wants to insure a win for his boss in the upcoming election.

So the UFO, which by now has fallen to Earth and is officially a Known Flying Object, is secretly but thoroughly ex-

MOVIES

amined by a group of scientists in a secret laboratory housed in (you guessed it) Hangar 18, which is located on an obscure Texas Air Force Base.

Whew. Once past all that tomfoolery, the movie settles down into a good little mystery — will our astronauts discover the truth about the UFO, or will the presidential advisor keep the secret

sacred by sending armed FBI heavies after them?

The most interesting question is not from where the spaceship has come or to whom it belongs, but why was it hovering near Earth and what do all those strange symbols in the interior of the vessel mean?

Unfortunately, the story, written by Tom Chapman and James L. Conway, seems to be a better outline than an actual movie. That's got to be the reason screenwriter Steven Thornley and director Conway finished with such an inept product — FBI men wearing three-piece suits "clandestinely" drive large black Hawaii Five-O cars when tailing suspects; the car chases are labored rather than thrilling; dialogue states not only the obvious, but the ridiculous.

All the actors (this is a male movie) are old television stars who, in recognizing the

movie's weakness, tried to overcompensate for the dialogue by strong characterization. The results are disastrous,

especially for Robert Vaughn as the cunning advisor who comes across as Dastardly Dan and Darren McGavin who plays a top NASA scientist who acts like the absent-minded professor. The only realistic portrayal is achieved by Hampton, who sounds, looks and acts like a Texas astronaut. Gary Collins sounds, looks and acts like a television talk show host.

"Hangar 18" isn't a total failure, because invariably its audience will provide the punchlines in some serious scenes and still be interested in the outcome of all the subplots.

Plus it's got some great shots of Big Spring, Texas, which is where most of the movie was filmed. Big Spring may not be Hollywood, but then again, "Hangar 18" isn't "Star Wars."