

FOR RELEASE UPON DELIVERY
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REMARKS BY MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON
"SALUTE TO SPRING" CEREMONIES
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Mr. Mayor, Friends:

Thank you so much for the honor you have bestowed upon me. I shall treasure it and remember always this spring evening when this great city is filled with blossoms and music.

No one can drive through New York at this time of year -- as I have done this afternoon -- without realizing that the impulse of a green thumb persists in the city dweller.

I congratulate your Mayor and the City of New York for setting the example which many cities are now following. But please don't rest on your laurels; those responsible for this burst of beauty hope to be joined by every one of you.

We want to see landscaped streets at every turn; flower boxes on windowsills; and "masses of flowers where masses pass" -- as New York's Mary Lasker said.

We want to see more historic buildings, churches and monuments aglow with light. We want to hear more fountains splashing with water. We want more parks and plazas open to the sky with benches where we can enjoy the vistas.

I think we want our cities with a more country air.

A city does not speak to you because it is big, but because it is beautiful, and it is the citizen who makes it so. He can work wonders in neighborhood associations; apartment dwellers can raise funds for trees; business and civic groups can finance plantings and playgrounds. And the key, of course, to widespread beauty in any city is each individual -- his own front yard.

We are thankful for the generous gift of cherry trees at the United Nations and for the transformation of Park Avenue. The donors have reminded us how accurate Lewis Mumford is, "A city... does not exist by the accretion of houses but by the association of human beings."

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But we still have a long way to go. For we want not only the entrances to the city -- its great airports, highways and waterfront piers -- but all its component parts as welcoming and beautiful as the avenues to which we point with the most pride.

As we hail the "Salute to Spring" in New York, we acknowledge something more fundamental about the society of which we are part.

For the beautification program, although it delights in appearances, will succeed only if the roots assure not only annual but perennial growth.

This is why I believe deeply in this program. And if you agree with me, I ask not the usual showing of hands but a more determined digging of green thumbs.

Thank you.

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