THE use of briquette fertilizers was introduced by the Chinese many centuries ago. In 1827, Sir Humphrey Davy (5) gave the following account of this practice in his "Agricultural Chemistry": "The Chinese, who have more practical knowledge of the use and application of manures than any other people, mix their night soil with one-third of its weight of a fat marl, make it into cakes, and dry it by exposure to the sun. These cakes form a common article of commerce in the empire."

In recent years, a variety of tablets, pellets, and briquette fertilizers made of mineral salts alone or in combination with organic matter has been placed on the market or described (4, 5, 7).

The advantages of briquette fertilizers are considerable. As a rule, the salts in briquettes are slowly soluble and their gradual release offers a continued source of plant nutrients. In turn, danger of chemical injury to the roots and of an unbalanced state of the soil solution are largely eliminated. Competing grass vegetation is encouraged only to a small extent, especially when briquettes are applied at a considerable depth.

The application of briquettes in the field in some cases is more convenient than treatments with solutions or measured amounts of powdered fertilizers. When briquettes include suitable organic materials, additional benefits can be expected from increased activity of useful microorganisms, possible release of growth-promoting substances, and the introduction of minor nutrient elements which may be deficient in certain soils. Organic briquettes are particularly well suited for fertilization of trees, shrubs, and some other plants which are adapted to forest conditions and which require buffered fertilizers.

This paper outlines the main features of briquette fertilizer practice as initiated and carried on during the past few years in Wisconsin. Originally, the use of briquettes was intended to aid in the maintenance of landscape plantings made by the State Conservation Department. With the accumulation of experience, however, it became evident that fertilizers of this type may be successfully used in a much broader field, including floricultural, horticultural, and soil conservation work.