

grown and cared for has not been generally known. Now that the public are becoming more acquainted with the case of their culture, the demand has increased until it requires thousands annually to supply the demand, where a few years ago dozens were ample. Nor is the demand confined to the Palm alone for house decorating, but Ferns, Ficus, Dracaena, Pandanus, Aspidistra, etc., each have their admirers. Failure or success in growing house plants depends almost wholly upon the person in attendance; situation, soil, water and pots are secondary considerations, but to be successful the peculiar requirements of each species must be studied, and even varieties of one species. In the ordinary living room the hot, dry atmosphere is certain death to most plants; therefore the cooler rooms should be selected. Do not attempt to grow flowering plants in a room where much gas is burned, that is if you want them to bloom; the amount of sulphur in the gas will cause the bloom to either drop before developing or develop an off color or a deformed flower. Gas has no effect worth mentioning on such plants as Palms, Ficus (rubber tree), Aspidistra, etc. Their only requirement is a sufficient and constant amount of care in giving light, air and water.

In the care of decorative plants, such as the above mentioned, avoid the use of commercial fertilizers, and that erroneous but widely practiced fad of dipping the plants with castor oil. The injudicious use of fertilizers has killed more valuable plants than it has ever been the means of benefiting. The use of castor oil, too, although not so quick in its action, is sure death to the subject. In my experience as a commercial florist I have found that when plants require feeding there is nothing like animal manures, and even with this mild form of stimulant too much care cannot be exercised in its use. When mineral or commercial fertilizers are used the time of application depends on the ingredients; if they contain nitrogen as the main manurial substance, they must be applied during the growing season, as plants assimilate this substance immediately; if phosphoric acid or potash is the main ingredient, then it should be applied before needed, or in other words should be incorporated with the soil in the compost heap. As plants take this form up slowly it is likely to remain in the soil until the roots take action upon them and make them soluble. It is a well known fact that all plants take their food in the form of solution, and almost exclusively direct from the soil by their roots. Nitrogenous manures are needed only to induce free growth of wood and foliage, the phosphates and potash give substance to the wood and color to the flower. In the preparation of the soil for decorative plants I would recommend the following as a compost: 50 per cent. clay loam sod, 20 per cent. jadoo fibre, 20 per cent. leaf mould, 10 per cent. well rotted cow manure. This mixture will answer for almost all varieties of palms, ferns, soft and hard wood decorative plants. For flowering plants, such as begonias, cyclamen, primuli, etc., a light rich, fibrous soil is required. As a rule, hard wooded plants require a heavier soil; also geraniums, fuchsias, cinerarias, and all varieties of liliun, do better in a rich, heavy soil. Care should always be exercised to see that the soil is taken from some high and dry land; a rich pasture or unbroken ground always being preferable. The more fibre your soil contains the less liable it is to sour, and the sooner your plants take hold of it.

Light, air, and water are indispensable to plants, as to man. Avoid the too frequent habit of crowding or huddling a lot of plants together, and thus producing the poor, puny, drawn, long-leggy plants that we see. Better to have a few, and have them sturdy, robust, and well matured. Give all the fresh air possible. Once a week is not too often to give them a total immersion, or to wash all the foliage. Perhaps the most important of all in the cultivation of plants is the knowledge of how and when to water; it is a knowledge that can be gained only by experience. It is one of the greatest difficulties we have to contend with in greenhouse work, to get men who thoroughly understand the art of watering. It is always safe to be on the dry side, for once the soil is soured by overwatering the growth is immediately checked, and will not again start, until chemical action has again taken place in the soil. Care must also be taken to see that the pots are not too large for the plants; this is a common error, one that we meet with every day. A customer will come to the conclusion that a plant needs repotting, and immediately acts on the impulse of the moment, going out into the garden and taking the first convenient soil; next a pot is selected two, or three, or perhaps four, sizes larger than