

various abrupt changes in the weather. Otherwise, many poor, spindly weaklings will appear.

Be careful not to uncover the peony roots too soon. Every year gardeners lose their supply of bloom by too early an exposure of the tender young red brown crowns, all of which contain the flower buds. Keep them covered yet awhile. Be careful, when pulling up last year's old stalks, not to bring up any soft young shoots that are always clinging tightly to the old stalk. The better way is to cut off the old stalks close to the ground, not pulling them up at all.

If the garden is large and the beds numerous, the best and cheapest way to procure stock is to grow everything possible from seed. This may be done either in flat boxes, indoors, or in the hotbed, outdoors.

In order that the seedlings be ready for transplanting by the third week in May (earlier than this would hardly be safe from the dangers of late frost), the seeds should be put in at once, that is, April 1; in fact, a week sooner, if possible. Those who have their seeds in now will have good, sturdy plants in plenty of time for the May transplanting. For those who have not their seeds in yet, delay no longer, but get your boxes ready at once.

The best boxes should be about four inches deep, 18 to 20 inches wide, and not longer than two feet; these dimensions will give a very handy box for moving about. Do not choose those having dovetailed corners; the moisture will warp them and spread the corners apart. Cut numerous holes in the bottom of each box to provide necessary drainage, and that the drainage will not be interfered with, nail a pair of one-half inch cleats across the bottom boards as well.

Boxes being now ready, prepare the soil. Spread a bottom layer of straw and manure in each first. Fill up with soil made up of part sand, part loam, sifted fine through an ordinary old-fashioned ash sieve to powder down any lumps. This last point is very necessary, lumpy earth affording a poor medium for the fine seeds. Firm the earth down well by pressing flat with a small level board, patted over the surface.

Very fine seed should be scattered broadcast, after which a handful or so of very finely powdered earth must be spread on top to cover the seeds. Water thoroughly by setting the flat in a tank of water, which will soak upwards from the bottom, wetting everything well without disturbing the seeds—a very important point. Label, cover with glass, or a sheet of white paper, and set away in a warm place.

PLANTS THAT BLOOM IN APRIL

LUNGWORT, VIRGINIAN COWSLIP, BLUEBELL, PULMONARIA OFFICINALIS

If the plant is in your garden, you will know it by one of these names. Like most tramps, it wanders around the country under various aliases, any one of which is well known.

One of the very early spring flowers, it may be found wild along the sloping banks of brooks, or in low, moist meadows. In the wild state, its peculiar burning-purple foliage is most remarkable, being more brilliant than when the plant has been tamed. But at all times, and in any situation, the leaves are lovely, for they soon change to a soft green-gray-blue, most restful to the eye as well as to the mind.

The inflorescence is not unlike that of the forget-me-not, long racemes of pink buds finally unfolding into trumpet-shaped blossoms, an inch or so long, arranged in clusters at the end of a stem two feet long. Such a changing feast of color, pink, then bright blue, next lilac, fading to a very light blue, all displayed in one cluster. After the flowers comes