

The Mississauga News

GARDENING

By JOHN BRADSHAW

One of the exciting recent developments in horticulture is a chemical called Silica Gel which will preserve many garden flowers in an almost fresh condition.

Much of their original beauty is retained for use in eye-catching dry flower arrangements for the late fall and winter months.

Roses, peonies, delphiniums, daffodils, marigolds; in fact, nearly all annuals, biennials, perennials and spring flowering bulbs can be treated in this way.

All this is brought about

because silica gel is a very thirsty chemical and fresh flowers treated with it are quickly dehydrated. The result is a perfectly dried flower which in most cases, in color and appearance, looks almost exactly as it did when alive. In the case of daffodils and delphiniums it's hard even for experts to tell at first glance that the blooms are dried.

PROCEDURE

The procedure is an easy one. All you need are some freshly picked flowers, a large cookie tin or a low container such as a shoe box with a diameter

of from 12 to 15 inches; some tape, a little florist wire and a can of silica gel. The wire, tape and chemical can be purchased from the better garden supply centres.

The drying treatment consists of burying the fresh flowers in silica gel in a sealed container for from 48 to 96 hours. After the dried flowers are removed they can be fitted out with stems of any desired length, using the florist wire.

Specimens not immediately to be used for arrangements can be stored in a fairly air-tight container in which is a small quantity of the silica gel. By doing this we provide the low humidity which gives the best conditions for dried flower life.

Up to now, the best methods of preserving flowers for winter use have included hanging in a dry place, burying in borax, sand or a mixture of borax and cornmeal. At its best this is only a fairly effective method for some flowers. The silica gel is a tremendous step forward.

Silica gel looks and feels like ordinary table salt. Mixed with it are some blue crystals and after several batches of flowers have been treated, you'll discover that the blue crystals will begin to turn white. When you notice this happening it's time to get the moisture out of the chemical by drying the mixture in a hot oven.

Now, the silica gel is re-activated and is ready to go to work again. It's a process that can be repeated almost indefinitely.

Silica gel is not a gel at all and the end product is in the form of hard granules like sand. In different blends it has hundred



This sleepy-eyed Joe is a Coati Mundi, one of several which has attracted many visitors to the Jungle Park Zoo, on Highway 10 just north of Highway 401. He seemed eager to greet his human onlookers.

reds of varied applications ranging all the way from baby powders to petroleum cracking catalysts.

The length of time that the flowers should remain in the container will have to be determined by your own experiments. For some, the two day period will be enough; for others, you will need three and still others a maximum of four days.

When used as a drying agent the chemical can take on up to 40 percent of its weight in water vapor — be soaking wet in fact — yet look and feel as dry as dust.

Each silica gel grain is extremely porous consisting of millions of tiny tunnels too small to be seen even by a microscope. These tunnels give silica gel grains enormous surface area — 90,000 square feet to one cubic inch of the chemical, or the same surface as two football fields. It's the surface area which gives silica gel its phenomenal capacity for taking up water vapor.

The first step in preserving fresh flowers is to submerge them in the silica gel in your cookie tin. Be sure and space the

flowers so that they do not touch the sides or the top of the container.

Next place the lid on the container and seal it with

masking tape. The container is then put away for a period of 48 to 96 hours where the contents will not be disturbed.

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Engineering & Works Department
CONTRACT P.N. 64-68

TENDERS FOR ROAD CONSTRUCTION

Sealed tenders, submitted in the tender envelope provided, will be received by the Clerk on behalf of the Corporation of the Town of Mississauga, until 12:00 o'clock noon E.D.S.T. **FRIDAY, JUNE 20, 1969**

for the reconstruction of approximately 13,500 feet of road, storm sewers and appurtenances, concrete structures and water main installation on Burnhamthorpe Road in the Town of Mississauga.

To be opened at a Public Tender Opening on Friday, June 20, 1969, at 2:00 p.m.

As of June 9 at 8:30 a.m., the contract documents, specifications, tender envelope and blank form of tender may be obtained from the Engineering & Works Department, 3185 Mavis Road, on payment of \$25.00 which is not refundable. They may also be viewed at the office of the Metropolitan Toronto Sewer and Watermain Contractors Association, 165 Cartwright Avenue, Toronto 19.

Each tender must be accompanied by a certified cheque in the amount of \$40,000.00.

Lowest or any tender not necessarily accepted.

R.W. Speck, Mayor
G. Lummiss, Clerk

W.J. Anderson, Town Engineer
D.G. McAlpine, P.A.

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