

## THINGS TO GROW IN THE SCHOOL ROOM AND ON THE SCHOOL GROUNDS.

### What to do in December.

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This is the month when winter winds begin to blow; when snow flurries fill the air and when everybody turns to the warmth of the fireside and thoughts concern themselves mainly with indoor life.

Potted plants will accordingly demand attention right now. Of these there are many beautiful varieties of easy culture which will give the most pleasing and satisfactory results.

Among the more common flowers for window or pot culture are geraniums, oxalis, begonias, pinks, fuchsias and palms; but we shall consider in this article a few of the plants which are not generally found in every home and which for that very reason will create more interest among the pupils and also help to enlist the interest of parents in your nature study work and methods.

**FREESIAS.**—Freesias bulbs should be potted in sandy, porous, well drained soil. They are not adapted for growing in water. The bulbs should be set a quarter inch beneath the surface and watered sparingly until roots form and growth begins, when the supply of water should be increased. During this period the pots may occupy a retired situation, but when growth begins set them near to the glass, or where they will get plenty of light, otherwise they will become spindling and the flower buds may blight.

**SCHIZANTHUS.**—I am sure if everyone knew what a lovely flower the hybrid Schizanthus or Butterfly Flower is as a house plant in pots or in a bed outdoors, it would be popular, indeed. The plants are easily grown from the seeds, bloom profusely, and are very handsome.

**LATANIA BORBONICA.**—This is an easily grown palm. Give it a soil composed of sand, leaf mold and fibrous garden loam, equal parts, well mixed, with good drainage. Water rather sparingly until growth begins, and keep the atmosphere moist by shallow pans of water placed upon the radiator, register or stove. In summer set the plants out upon the east porch, where it will be shaded from sun and wind, and cover the soil with sphagnum moss. If the plant is in a pot set it inside of a larger pot, and place sphagnum moss between, also over the soil. An occasional watering with lime water, say once or twice every six months, will be found beneficial.

**IMPATIENS HOLSTI.**—The beautiful hybrids of *Impatiens Holsti* range in color from white to deep purple, and are among the best of pot plants for blooming the window, either in winter or summer. They bloom freely and continuously. The plants, however, will not bear a tenacious, wet soil, nor will they bear extremes of heat and cold. They like a shady situation and a sandy situation, and a sandy, porous soil and good drainage. If the soil is tenacious and the drainage insufficient, the plants are liable to be flowerless, or if buds appear they will fall off prematurely instead of remaining on and developing finally into flowers.

Other very beautiful flowers which may be grown in pots very successfully include: *Collus*, *Clarkia*, *Heliotrope*, *Gypsophila*, *Godetia*, *Lobelia* (dwarf), *Nasturtiums*, *Bartonia*, *Dwarf Scabiosa*, *Virginia Stocks*.

It is not too late to make a bed of spring flowering bulbs such as *Tulips*, *Narcissus*, etc., if you neglected to do it last month.

Trees, bushes of very hard growth, will also bear resetting or removing to new places, provided you move both earth and roots together. The most satisfactory plan is to dig around the bush when the soil is slightly frozen and then remove the entire mass all at one time.

## CHRISTMAS, ITS ORIGIN AND HISTORY.

Although Christmas is the season in which the birth of Christ is commemorated, still it is apparent that the sanctity of this season was recognized in times long antecedent to the birth of Christ.

The Roman winter solstice festival, as celebrated on December 25, in connection with the worship of the sungod, *Mithra*, appears to have been adopted in its special form by Aurelian about A. D. 273.

Later the festival was adopted by the Western Church with full symbolic appropriateness though not with historic justification. About the fourth century the day was accepted by the Eastern Church as the solemn anniversary of the birth of Christ.

The Christmas tree with its branches gayly illuminated with colored candles and hung with ornaments and little gifts for children is of German origin. Santa Claus also has his origin with the Germans.

The Christmas card now an almost universal vehicle for the conveyance of seasonable wishes dates from 1846 when J. C. Horsley designed a card as the suggestion of Sir Henry Cole.

—*Nelson's Encyclopedia.*