

Plants and Flowers.

CARE OF INDOOR SEEDLINGS.

Seeds of pinks of all kinds, aster, petunia, verbena, pansy, and in fact all of our garden flowers that transplant well may now be started indoors, and the season of outdoor bloom thereby lengthened for many weeks. Use shallow boxes of good garden soil, cover the seeds lightly, then press the soil down firmly and evenly with a bit of board or something with a smooth, flat surface. Some advise covering the boxes until the seeds germinate, but with me it causes the soil to mold. Watch that the seeds do not dry out. The boxes may be kept in a warm place until the little plants begin to appear, then place immediately in a sunny window. Keep the soil moist without over watering. Too much moisture or too much warmth will kill the little plants by causing them to camp off. Transplant before they crowd much.

Pinks and pansies like a cooler place than most of the others; much warmth causes them to spindle and also encourages insects. Look out for the gray mite and aphids. The latter can be prevented by sprinkling tobacco powder over the little plants. It is cheap stuff and can be had of a florist or dealer in florists' supplies. Watch for the mite. Its appearance can usually be detected by a gray appearance of the upper side of the leaves, but the insect and its eggs are usually found on the underside. Make some whale-oil soapuds, not very strong, and with the hand wet in the suds brush over the little plants so as to wet the leaves thoroughly, especially on the underside. If only a few plants are affected, pull them up and throw them away or separate them from the others. Several applications of the suds should be made. It will not harm the plants unless made quite strong. Remember that this insect never flourishes in a cool, damp atmosphere. Plenty of moisture on the foliage without overwatering the roots is both remedial and preventive. This rule applies to all plants infested by this insect. It is the worst greenhouse pest. If you suspect its presence, but cannot find it with the unaided eye, use a magnifying glass. It is flesh-colored, egg-shaped, usually with two dark spots on the back.—[W. F. Heath, Cheshire Co., N. H.]

SPINDLING GERANIUMS.

In spring, there are usually several spindling geraniums, which are of little use for bedding out in the ordinary way, or to keep for another season's blooming. This long, slender growth with few branches is caused by overcrowding and continued blooming without having the ends pinched back. Having experimented with such plants for several years, I have found a novel way to treat them and can sometimes make a good-sized bed of geraniums from one plant. If the plant has but one stem, a bed cannot be made from it alone, but if there are three or four long branches the plant will yield readily to the treatment.

Set the plant in the center of the bed, placing it quite deep, so that the branches can be laid flat on the ground without breaking. Spread them in different directions, pegging them down close to the ground for their whole length. Grown in that position, they send out a shoot from each joint, the latent buds being always already to grow under favorable circumstances. Each new shoot will grow upward, there being no side shoots except those produced later from the upright plants. All the shoots having an equal chance for light and sunshine, there are a much larger number of flowers produced from the plant. Roots start out from each joint where it touches the soil, so that in a very short time dozens of plants are growing where one was planted, which is one secret of the success of the plan.

There are many roots to support the plant, each shoot being partially dependent on its individual root instead of all drawing support from one root. In fall such plants can be taken up, divided and placed in the cellar, but should not be divided too small, doing better if left as large as can be handled easily. In spring they can be separated in small sections, each with its own root, and bedded as usual. Plants with

one stem can be treated in the same way, making a bed in combination with other plants.—[Lena A. Holmes, Ill.]

SOME SWEET PEA POINTERS.

These lovely flowers have seemed to deteriorate and in some instances go back to the old-fashioned wild sweet pea. There are different causes, but I think one serious cause to be poor seed. There has been such a demand for sweet pea seed that a great many have sold great quantities of cheap seed and these will not produce the finest flowers. I have raised sweet peas in quantities several years and have purchased seed from different parties, and I have found out that a great deal depends on the seed. I always cut the blossoms for market so that I must necessarily depend upon others for my seed. Last summer I planted two rows 200 ft long of three varieties, red, white and lavender. I purchased the white seed from two different firms, but the seed was the same variety. Just one-half of these white peas yielded an immense amount of blossoms on long, stout stems during the whole season. The rest of the white ones never brought me in a nickel; the blossoms came out on little slender stems about 2 inches in length and the vines made a miniature hedge. Little vines started out at every point, the same way with the lavender, and they were all planted in the same row.

The first was the most magnificent sight I ever saw in the shape of sweet peas. I cut them twice a week, and the last cuttings were as fine as the first. I could cut the single stems all the season without taking part of the vine to make them long enough, as I must on some other varieties late in the season. I never plant sweet peas in the same place 2 yrs in succession, nor ever in shade or near big trees. I get the seed in as early as possible in spring and fertilize with ashes and commercial fertilizers in the row on moderately rich ground. I purchase seed as soon as the catalogs come in before the best seed has all been sold. I love to raise sweet peas.—[Mrs John Galliard, Erie Co., Pa.]

FOOD FOR POT PLANTS.

The great demand for plant food which is in convenient form for use and is also cleanly, has caused many such articles to be placed on the market. Most of these are very good, but one can prepare them at home, making the cost less while they produce the same results. The following are both used in the water given the plants, though they can be used dry by digging a small quantity into the soil around the roots. The former method is safer, however, as one can more easily tell what quantity is being used.

Take a gallon jar and fill it with bones, packing them in closely; then add one cup of potash which will fill in among the spaces. Cover with water and set away for a time. Before long the bones will all be dissolved and the substance in the jar will resemble soft soap. A tablespoon of this, dissolved in the water given each large plant will be a suitable dose; other plants being given a quantity suitable to their size. The following formula will also be found good: To 1 gal hot water add 4 oz white sugar, 16 oz sulphate of ammonia and 8 oz nitrate of potash. When dissolved, place in bottles, cork tightly and use a tablespoon and a half in each gallon of water used on the plants. Water only the soil, as many of these fertilizers are too strong for the foliage, leaving unsightly spots on it.—[Marion Meade, Ill.]

SOWING FLOWER SEEDS.

Now is the time to start primroses, gloxinias, maurandia, smilax and the like. Procure cigar boxes and with gimlet or knife make a couple of holes in the bottom of each. Then put in coal or broken bone, then a layer of dirt, and having sifted in the final layer press it down. For this purpose, as well as for leveling the surface of the soil, use a pasteboard a trifle smaller than the box.

After preparing the soil and wetting it somewhat, sow the seed, sprinkling on just enough dirt to cover. If the seed are only one-sixteenth inch thick, cover one-eighth inch and in like proportion all others. After sowing, press the soil gently to make firm and exclude air.

Germination will be hastened several days. Don't water too much. Many persons fail with primroses, cobaeas and other flowering plants simply because they over water. Keep the soil not wet but moist, to do which do not pour water on the surface and produce floods, but set boxes in a dish of water. Owing to the holes in the bottom of them and the "subsoil" of coal or bones, all the water that is needed will be quickly absorbed; but best of all there will then be less likelihood of the plants damping off—a thing which they are otherwise apt to do, primroses and clematis in particular. [Fred C. Sibley, Otsego Co., N. Y.]

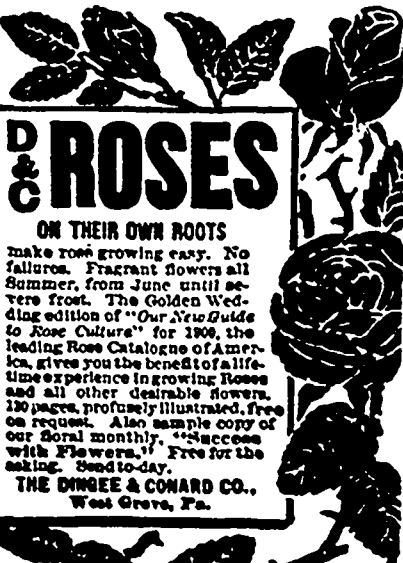
STARTING EARLY FLOWERS.

Some varieties of flowers must be started indoors in order to get them to bloom before frost, while other sorts will flower in early summer if started early enough. Cosmos, single dahlias, chrysanthemums, heliotropes and geraniums are of the first class and will not give good results if planted in the open ground. Aster, balsam, carnation, marigold, petunia, phlox, salpiglossis, stock and verbena all do better to be started indoors and transplanted.

Sow the seed in shallow boxes in the house or in the hotbed and label each variety, or you will have a nice mixup later in the season. Cover the seed lightly, put the boxes in a warm place and protect from direct sunlight. Cover with a glass to prevent the soil drying out too quickly, and use care in watering, so as not to wash out the fine seed. A camp paper may be put on top of the soil and the water poured gently on this. After the plants put out the third pair of leaves they should be transplanted to other boxes and not set in the open ground until of suitable size.

For Planting Trees, dig generous-sized holes and deep down in well-drained land and shallow in wet places. An adequate amount of well-composted material should be used about the roots. An annual top-dressing should be applied to produce the best effect, both in tree and leaf.—[O. B. Hadwin, Worcester Co., Mass.]

Coarse grass such as timothy does not do for lawns. A good mixture consists of equal parts Kentucky blue, red top and white Dutch clover, sown 3 to 4 bu p n.



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