

THE GARDEN CLINIC

By W. E. HARTNOLL, F.R.H.S.
Garden Editor

TOMATO PROBLEMS

A few weeks back, while I was hospitalized, I received a letter requesting information on pruning tomatoes — why prune, what does it do, is there an advantage in pruning or not?

As I make a number of home garden tours, I see many with a few tomato plants, and it seems to be the time to answer that letter I received. We'll start with the "WHY prune?"

Plants need to be pruned to direct the flow of plant food and water into fruit production and to avoid overgrowth, making it difficult to tie the plants to stakes. Pruning a tomato plant consists simply of removing sucker growths by pinching or cutting them out before they attain an appreciable size. Suckers appear in the axils where the leaf stem joins the main stalk, and if they are permitted to develop for a week or longer they take on the appearance of mature growth, which confuses many gardeners who think they are part of the main plant and are reluctant to remove them. Sucker growth has to go if you want bigger and better fruit, they should be removed whenever seen, one pinching doesn't mean that you've got the suckers under control, you may have to do it two or three times during the growing season.

Gardeners who were fortunate in getting an early start on planting have already started the pruning, but others held up by late frosts and bad weather have plants that are just beginning to require weekly attention. Pruning and training results in earlier fruit, but the quantity will likely be reduced.

We gave you the pros and cons on mulching, this is de-

sirable where tomatoes are growing, it conserves moisture in the soil, keeps weeds down and most important, acts as an insulation during dry periods.

So there is definitely an advantage in pruning, providing you want to have bigger and tastier fruit. One thing overlooked by home gardeners is the application of a special tomato food, available from your nursery.

FACT OR FALLACY

Every backyard lawn expert has his own theories about growing grass. For those who are most interested in a "good growth of the green" here are a few facts to correct some old fallacies. They are the recommendations of William "Bill" Richardson, a graduate of OSU and manager of Vigoro Lawn and Garden Products.

Many oldtimers still say that a lawn should not be watered when the sun is shining. Mr. Richardson points out that this is a fallacy. If water is needed, there is no reason why grass cannot be watered on a bright, sunny day. Early morning watering, for those who are awake with the "birds", is ideal for there is less chance of water evaporation. But the time never to water is in the evening. The grass would be damp during the night, a factor which encourages fungus.

While on the subject of watering, there are those who say that during a drought the grass MUST be watered. NOT SO according to Mr. Richardson. Rarely are the summer dry spells severe enough to permanently damage a properly maintained lawn. By this he means a lawn that has been mowed regularly at a proper height (one and one-half to two inches) and one that has been fertilized properly during spring and fall.

Watering will, of course, make the dormant brown grasses, presentable in summer, but it will not improve the turf appreciably. On the other hand, if the lawn has been mismanaged and the turf is weed-ridden, a thin sod cover would offer poor insulation from the baking heat of the sun, and the grass may be killed.

The choice of water is individual, but once watering is started it must be continued on a regular basis. A green summer turf needs water promptly when it attains a blue-gray color. Bent lawns are another story. This fussy grass needs proper watering, fertilizing, and low mowing to be kept in top condition all summer long.

About fertilizing, at Vigoro we prefer to use fertilizer twice a year—at one time Mr. Richardson stated, the recommendations were for three or even four times a year—this made extra work for the home "lawn-maker," but now, if Golden Vigoro was used in the early spring — it continues to feed plants correctly day-by-day during the summer growing season. One application of Golden Vigoro keeps the lawn green, then in the fall, (say about mid-September) an application of Pink Vigoro should be applied to feed the root system during the winter. Many home gardeners seem to think a high nitrogen fertilizer should be applied during the fall, but this again is fallacy. There is no point to stimulate the growth of grass at that time of year—a good "lawn-maker" doesn't want to permanently damage a properly maintained lawn. By this he means a lawn that has been mowed regularly at a proper height (one and one-half to two inches) and one that has been fertilized properly during spring and fall.

CUTTING UPKEEP

Mow the lawn at a 3/4 inch height once a week (letting the grass go too long between mowings leads to weaknesses that in turn lead to much extra work on your part. Study the mowing pattern you use "could you save time by changing the shape of the lawn so you could mow with less "backing and filling?" Could you use mowing edges of brick or concrete to eliminate the need to hand trim the edges of the lawn each time? Are there areas that get much traffic so that the grass doesn't really have a chance to be vigorous? These areas could be paved.

SHADY AREA COLOR

I've often heard a gardener, especially a new one, complain that he can't grow flowers because he has shade. No reason to complain, all he needs to do is ask a nurseryman in his area what are the best plants for shady areas, something that will give him color and he'll get what he wants. For example, if he'd consider coleus, the foliage offers plenty of color, and begonias, he'd have a good start—that's because these plants are shade tolerant, but no plant will grow where there is no sunlight at any time of the day. Plants depend on sunlight in order to make their food and no plant will grow where there is no light, yet a number will grow where light is subdued to some extent.

Try the plants mentioned above, and also select a few impatiens (you may call it sultana or patience plants) these will also grow in fairly heavy shade. In a lightly shaded area, there are a few extra plants to consider, sweet alyssum, balsam, forget-me-not, pansy and viola.

Treatment of flowers growing in shade is important. Watering should be deep, BUT not too frequent as less water is lost from both soil and plant, where there is less sun. Water only when the soil becomes dry.

Mulching is beneficial, but only if of a material that admits plenty of air. A non-porous or too deep mulch will only help plant diseases become established, so avoid peat and use cocoa bean shells and hold to a depth of one inch.

If plants become spindly or "leggy" this means they are reaching out to light. Increase this if you can, but otherwise nip out too-long stems, (just above a pair of leaves), to make plants more compact. Thin any leaves or stems which overhang the leggy plants.

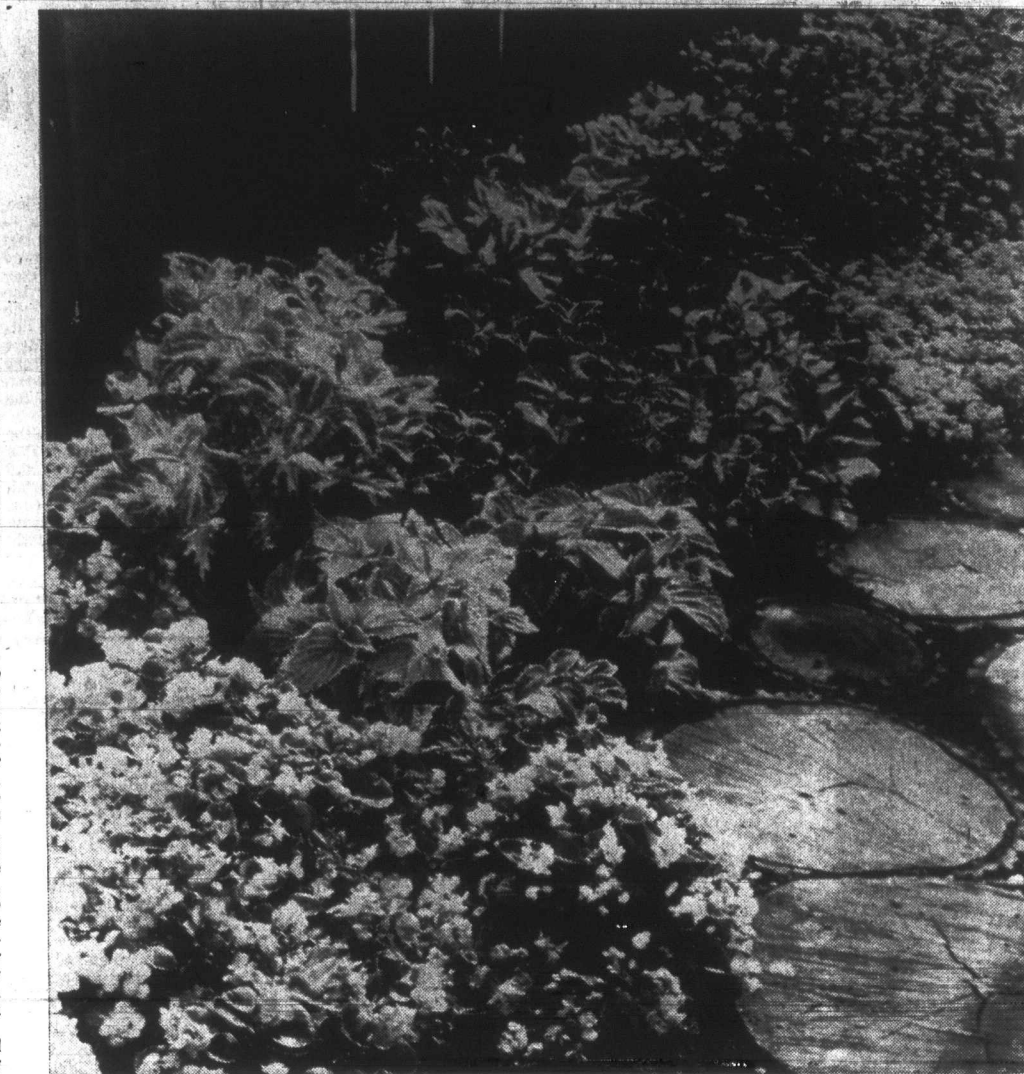
Remove dead or faded flowers and cut back plants directly after a period of prolific bloom. This rejuvenates the plants and will result in even more blossoms for you to enjoy at a later date.

Recommend tractor mowers

If you have a very large lawn, a small tractor-style mower could be the answer to keeping it properly groomed. The cost of such mowers ranges from \$450 to \$1,500, depending on the attachments and accessories which in some cases include snow removal equipment.

Storage space can pose a problem, as the tractor is relatively large and attachments heavy and difficult to store. In choosing a tractor that can do a big job, Professor Ross Irwin of the School of Engineering, University of Guelph, suggests some guidelines. Features to look for, says Professor Irwin, are an electric start, automatic transmission, handy controls, brakes for parking, and the fewest possible belt drives. Headlights may look good but are not really necessary.

Numerous tractor mowers have a 6-inch clearance off the ground, a 3- to 4-foot stance, and a reverse gear. One unusual option offered on some models is a hydraulic lift for snow. The most popular design has a 4 horsepower engine, but a 14 horsepower engine can be purchased. Designed for unusually large lawns, the tractor mower can handle the job easily because of its size and strength.



A shady path, such as the one pictured above, is a joy to walk through, because of the relief from summer sun and partly because it represents a triumph for the gardener — a correct choice of plants that thrive in little sun. Begonias (foreground) are first generation hybrids which have especially large plants, ditto blooms. Coleus in the background is called Rainbow for its many color combinations.

Summer gardening hints

The best time to control the second brood of birch leaf miner is late June or early July, according to horticulturists with the Ontario Department of Agriculture and Food. The larvae which have dropped to the ground to pupate are just emerging at this time.

Satisfactory results can be obtained by the use of lindane or malathion. These sprays should be applied by carefully following the manufacturer's directions.

POWDERY MILDEW
Powdery mildew is one of the most prevalent diseases of home gardens, say horticulturists with the Ontario Department of Agriculture and Food.

Control should be started as soon as any white, powdery coating appears on the surface of leaves, shoots or buds and continued at 5 to 7-day intervals. Wettable sulfur is quite effective for control, but should never be applied when temperatures are 85°F or higher.

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Dr. Desmond Morton speaks to Rotarians

STREETSVILLE—Dr. Desmond Morton, assistant professor of Canadian history at the University of Toronto's Erindale campus spoke to the Rotary Club of Streetsville at its last meeting, choosing a Dominion Day theme.

Dr. Morton stated he felt last July 1 may be Canada's final Dominion Day as such since there are rumours that "Canada Day," "Confederation Day" or some other name may replace its old title.

Confederation in 1867 was designed to unite the whole of Canada, he said, but it evolved into a political fight with power politics between two parties, Canada is the third oldest country in the world to have avoided civil war. The fact that we survived, Dr. Morton attributes to both good luck and good management. He paid tribute to men like John A. Macdonald, Mackenzie King and others who "had the guts" to stand up against those who

would have destroyed Canada for their own ends.

Dr. Morton noted that July 1 was also Ontario's 103rd birthday although few Ontarians are aware of this fact. At the same time Ontarians are the most loyal peoples of Canada to the Confederation. Ontario was the only province to support Confederation 100 per cent by all parties and they are still unanimous on this point.

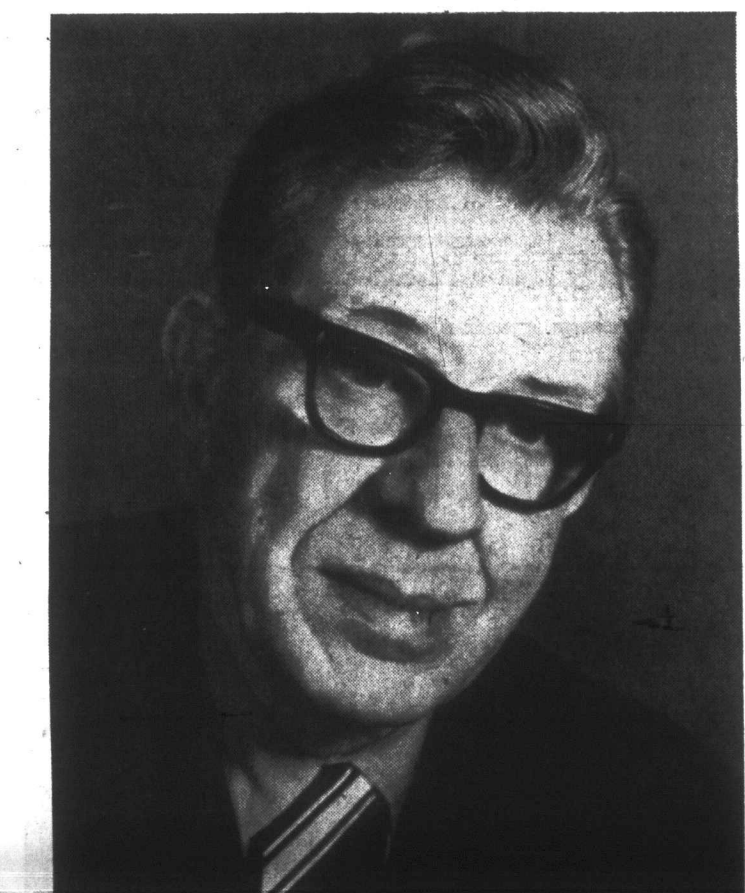
Who can we do to keep Canada together asked Dr. Morton. We must guarantee everyone an equal chance and we must come to a clear understanding of our relationship to the United States, he affirmed. He made it clear that we cannot progress without foreign capital aid such as that forthcoming from the U.S.

Dr. Morton wondered what jobs our children will have 30 years from now or whether they will have jobs at all. It depends on what scientific and technological education they

absorb now. Industrial development in Canada holds the key to our future plans he affirmed and plans for this future must be made now.

Visitors at the Rotary meeting were Art Cooley of Ossington and Dr. J. Munro of Toronto.

pee Rotary Club, New Hampshire; Howard Lawrence of Mississauga Club; Tom McCallum of Port Credit and non-Rotarians Dr. John Rodway of Streetsville and Hank Munro of Toronto.



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Iris do best in July - August

Iris plants do best when planted during July and August after they have passed their flowering peak, say horticulturists with the Ontario Department of Agriculture and Food. Plants that have been growing well for

several years will have roots that are overcrowded and should be lifted. The soil should be washed away to expose the rhizomes, and division should be made with a sharp knife.

The younger, outer portion of the roots should be divided for replanting, while the older outer part should be discarded. Pieces of rhizomes with two or three "fans" of leaves attached make the best divisions.

The rhizomes should then be placed in a shallow hole with a small ridge in the bottom. The roots are spread out over the ridge and soil is placed over them to cover the rhizomes to a depth of one inch.

Divisions which are planted about one foot apart will increase rapidly and will soon provide a massive show. When three to five clumps are planted together they will provide a much better effect than will a single one standing alone.

Agriculture policy

Canadian agriculture has six basic policy alternatives or combinations of alternatives to choose among, says Dr. Glenn Furnell, Director General of the Canada Department of Agriculture's Economics Branch.

They are: balance the resources within agriculture and balance the total agricultural resources with the rest of our economy; stabilize farm family income; equalize income within agriculture; provide a safe, adequate supply of wholesome, high-quality food to meet the total demand of the domestic and foreign markets and foreign aid commitments of Canada; withdraw government and controls at all levels and allow a free market economy to operate in agriculture; and include agriculture in the overall policy fight against inflation.

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Dept. of Agriculture advice

Now is the time to protect your taller growing plants from the wind by staking, advise horticulturists with the Ontario Department of Agriculture and Food. Plants can

be tied to the stakes with soft string or raffia, but should not be tied so tightly that there is no room for stem expansion.

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