

Geraniums for Winter Bloom in House or Office

W. T. Macoun, Horticulturist, Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa

THERE are few plants which can be made to give greater satisfaction during the winter months than the geranium, for if the plants are properly cared for and the conditions of temperature, light and sunshine are favorable, abundant bloom may be obtained from early in the winter until



Geraniums in Bloom

This photo was taken from the outside of the Horticulturist's Office, C.E.F., Ottawa, and shows the appearance of the bloom to the passer-by
(Photo by F. T. Shutt, C.E.F., Ottawa)

it is time for bedding out in the spring. The geranium suffers less from insects and fungous diseases than most house plants, which is another inducement to cultivate this beautiful flower. Anyone who has a suitable window in his house or office can obtain abundant winter bloom if the following treatment is given: This method refers only to old plants that have been in the house all winter, or in the bed all summer, and is recommended for those who do not wish to take time to care for the plants in pots.

Plants that have been blooming all summer are usually too large for transplanting into pots in the autumn, or if not too large are too "leggy" from being grown close together in beds. But, for the average person, these are the most available, and they may be treated in such a manner that good results will follow. In order to make the plants stocky and of good shape, and capable of producing abundant bloom, they should be pruned back to within six inches or less of the ground about a month before the plants are likely to be killed by frost. If they are not well headed back they will be leggy, as buds will only break from the upper parts of the stems. By the time there is frost, shoots will have broken along the old stems and the plants will bloom sooner than if the pruning is left until they are put in pots.

We have had the best results from the use of rather large pots, six inch giving good satisfaction. While bloom may be obtained a little earlier by using smaller pots, the plants have to remain in them so long—from September to

May—that they become pot bound, and are not satisfactory or slightly in late winter and early spring when flowers are much appreciated.

The soil for the pots should not be very rich, as plants will make vigorous growth in comparatively poor soil, and will bloom sooner. The mistake is too often made of using rich soil, resulting in a large amount of sappy growth, with few or no flowers. It is from the firm or partially ripened wood that the best bloom is produced. Good loamy soil with enough sand mixed with it to make it rather open will be found quite satisfactory. It should not be of such a character that it will bake, for after watering for several months, unless the soil is of the right texture, the surface becomes hard and the plants do not thrive well. When the plants are dug it is usually necessary to reduce their size so that they will go nicely into the pots. The roots, also, may be shortened in, so that they will not be crowded in the pot and so that the plant may be set well down; as the lower it is in the pot, the less leggy the plant is likely to be if the shoots do not come from the lower part of the stem. The soil is made firm about the plant, and the pot filled with soil to within about half an inch of the

One of the greatest mistakes made by many who grow plants in houses is that too much watering is done. The geraniums will not make much growth for several weeks after planting, and during this time they should be given comparatively little water—just enough in fact to prevent them from becoming dry. At no time should the soil be soaked, as much water will tend to make sappy growth with few flowers. Each pot should be treated individually, when watering, and the plant watered only when it needs it. Too often all the plants are watered at the same time, and at regular intervals without regard to the needs of the individual plants. Some plants do not need as much moisture as others, as they are not making as thrifty a growth and do not transpire so much moisture. Plants should not be watered until the surface of soil has become dry.

It will be necessary to do some judicious pinching back of the new growth early in the winter when the plants are growing thriftily, to induce them to throw out additional shoots, as the more shoots there are, the more bloom there will be later on. One should sacrifice some of the earlier blooms rather than neglect pinching back, as a plant well covered with bloom is so much more



Geraniums in Bloom, inside view, Horticulturist's Office, C.E.F., Ottawa

(Photo by F. T. Shutt, C.E.F., Ottawa)

top. The plants should now be well watered and put in the shade for a few days, after which they may be placed in the window where they are to remain, and here it may be said that light and sunshine are absolutely essential if satisfactory results are to be obtained, hence a southern window should be chosen and the plants put as near the glass as possible. A cool room is much better than a warm one for geraniums. In a warm room the plants grow beyond bounds and do not bloom well.

satisfactory than one with only one or two trusses, even though obtained earlier.

The time when the geraniums begin to bloom will depend very much on the time when they are cut back the previous summer and on the variety, but if judiciously planned there should be bloom from January until May. Some of the most satisfactory varieties for winter bloom are: Jacquerie, Cardi, Phyllis, Lilian Duff, Dryden, Severin, Gettysburg, although there are many others which succeed almost equally as well.