# Fertilizing House Plants

LACK of sufficient fertility in the soil is the cause of many house plants dying. In most cases the potting soil was not well prepared. With a soil of proper composition and judiciously watered afterwards, most growers claim that very little, if any, fertilizer is required. In fact, it is claimed by many that plants are lost because too much plant food was given. Until the last few years liquid manure was the chief fertilizer used, and perhaps fewer plants were damaged as long as that was the case.

The introduction of concentrated horticultural manures and plant foods which are more easily applied and less objectionable as far as appearance and odor are concerned, has resulted in many discarding the liquid manure. Among the valuable fertilizers commonly used are Arnott's Concentrated Horticultural Manures, Steele-Briggs' Plant Food and Rennie's Plant Food.

In discussing this subject with THE HORTICULTURIST, Mr. E. F. Collins, of Toronto, said: "These concentrated plant foods are much more easily applied, are cleaner to handle, and contain more of the fertilizing elements required by the plant than does the liquid manure frequently used. I have used Arnott's Horticultural Manure, and know that it is good for strong plants. There is, however, no use in applying such foods to sickly plants. Most amateurs make this mistake. They imagine that if a plant is weak it needs more fertilizer. Instead, the plant needs nursing. It does not need fertilizer any more than a sick man needs a beefsteak. It would do the plant more good to repot it, to wash and cut the ends off the roots and then to reset in clean, sweet soil. It should be kept pretty dry for a month or six weeks, and after that it should have regained its former thriftiness.

"In adding fertilizer it should be given in small doses. I prefer a small application twice a week to a larger one only once a week. For palms, ferns and healthy, well-rooted plants, half a teaspoonful in a 12 quart can of water once a week gives good results. Each plant should get a thorough watering, care being taken that none goes on the foliage."

# Magnolias in Queen Victoria Park

Roderick Cameron, Niagara Falls, Ontario

THE Star-flowered Magnolia, *Magnolia stellata*, should be planted more extensively in this and similar localities. It is an early bloomer. The flowers are pure white and semi-double, numerous and fragrant. The plants often begin to bloom when but two feet high, and they never grow beyond the size of a medium-sized shrub, very bushy and short jointed, a feature much desired in all shrubs. I am satisfied that this variety is the hardiest of the number grown here, but it should be planted where the morning sun would not strike it. It flowers during the first week in May, and is, therefore, subject to late frosts. The sun being kept from it early in the morning will save the flowers from injury, if they are not frozen too hard.

It is said that magnolias are hard to transplant successfully, particularly if of medium to large size. I have found no trouble with them if they are well trimmed back and planted in deep, damp soil. I have one transplanted after flowering for eight years. Some of the leading branches died back beyond where they were cut; but the plants bloomed the same season freely. It is *Magnolia Soulangeana*, one of the hardiest and best, and it blooms soon after the aforementioned. The flowers are white with some purple on the outside of the petals. It grows to a large shrub or small tree in size, and is a prolific bloomer during the first of June.

*Magnolia Lennei* comes into bloom next in succession. It is more shrubby, with large flowers, reddish-purple outside, and more showy than the preceding varieties. Perhaps it is not quite so hardy.

Star-flowered Magnolia

Immediately after this one, the Umbrella Tree, *Magnolia tripetala*, comes into bloom. It grows here to a height of 35 feet, making a magnificent tree, with leaves about 18 inches to two feet long. This species produces flowers about 10 inches across, pure white, with a pleasant odor at a distance, but rather heavy close by. It blooms from the middle to the end of June. The cone-like fruit produced by this variety is very beautiful towards fall, being of a bright pinkish-red color, and about five inches long by three in diameter.

Following the Umbrella Tree in bloom comes the sweetest of them all, the Sweet Swamp White Bay, *Magnolia glauca*, by some called the Beaver Tree. This is a very attractive shrub or small tree, evergreen in the south, but deciduous here. The flowers are milk white, globose, very fragrant and pleasant, about three inches across. They are not produced all at once like the foregoing, this one blooming during the first two weeks in July. The leaves are light green above and purplish-white on the under side—wherefore its name, glauca.

There are several other varieties of magnolia grown in Victoria Park, but these are the best and hardiest blooming in succession as named. The magnolia and tulip trees should not be planted in the fall; better plant when the ground works well in the spring. They do best on deep, damp, peaty soil; but will succeed well on a sandy loam. All the magnolias are magnificent plants, producing showy blooms in abundance. But, independent of the blooms, they should be grown if for nothing else than their foliage.

## The Mortality of Trees

There are trees living to-day that are believed to be hundreds, and, perhaps, thousands of years old, and they show no signs of decay. From the theoretical view-point, there is no reason why the life of trees should cease; they should taste of immortality, as each successive year sees the renewal of organs whereby life is maintained and also the multiplication of roots and leaf shoots to furnish nourishment. Practically, however, death is as sure to the tree as it is to the animal kingdom. According to its own internal organism, a tree could go on living forever; but there are external conditions that bring life to a close.

A tree is dependent for its food supply mainly on the soil in which it stands. If this soil is sterile, the tree will starve to death. The ravages of insects also bring it to an untimely end; caterpillars destroy its leaves, beetles penetrate and kill the wood. Fungus diseases comprise other mortal factors. The air is laden with germs which enter into the tree in every exposed crevice, and perform their deadly work. The elixir of life for the tree is in the destruction of insects, the annihilation of disease and the maintenance of fertility in the soil. With these conditions, trees might live almost forever.