

# Legendary plant flourishes with a green thumb touch

Richard Cooper's interest in gardening is as old as his marriage. It all began in 1947 when Richard saw his wife Barbara's sorority mug and decided it really was "pretty ugly."

To remedy this there was only one logical solution—put a plant in it. Cooper chose a sturdy Chinese evergreen. Little did he realize just how sturdy it was—the plant has been in there ever since. Because it was so in touch with the young couple from the beginning and it produced a new shoot each time his wife became pregnant, they lovingly called it the "fertility plant."

Now after 30 years and four babies, this miraculous plant continues to grow and just like Mrs. Cooper, looks better than ever. It has never been repotted and now there is no space left for any soil to be added, or even much water. It definitely lives on love.

THIS LEGENDARY PLANT launched Cooper on a career of sensitive and experimental gardening which in recent years has become a major interest in his life. He has a magic touch, and goes around sticking grapefruit seeds in geranium pots which just happen to be wintering in his breakfast room—and of course they grow. The silly watermelon plant coming up in the terrace between the cracks was usually planted there by him during a summer supper, and it too flourishes.

"One of my greatest pleasures," he said, "is to find a new kind of plant."

After I understand its growing habits I start shopping around for the seeds of this new variety. I start about a dozen plants and then give them away. My friends love it and I do too."

Although he describes himself as a "hit and miss gardener" and indeed there is something pish about his attitude, the results are clear testimony to his curiosity, skill and patience. The variety and careful selection of indoor and outdoor plants are those of a sophisticated and knowledgeable gardener.

Dahlias and tuberous begonias are his specialties and his pride and rightfully so. His dahlias are huge, healthy and already in bloom. He has been growing them for many years and prefers the "dinner plate" size varieties, even though he says the pompoms give more bloom.

Although it is a little early for the big Dahlia show, Cooper's plants are already four and five feet high and many are in bloom. He admits he rushed their planting in early May this year but, being an amateur meteorologist, he decided that the winds had shifted and we were in for a warm summer.

As for summer culture of these spectacular plants, he suggests staking at the time of planting to support the heavy stalks as they develop. Frequent feeding with Peter's Fertilizer (18-18-18) and disbudding the small side buds to produce even larger primary blossoms.

THE RESULT of this care is a display of huge flamboyant flowers and others which are symmetrical and elegant. Dahlias can be cut and either be put in a vase or, as Mrs. Cooper does, floated in a flat bowl. It is essential, however, to cut them either in the early morning or early evening. Dahlias have hollow stems, and air bubbles form in the cut end of the stem and prevent the passage of water up to the flower head.

To eliminate the bubble, place the end of the stem in a vase of water and nip off one half inch. Water can then be drawn up through the hollow tube. If the air bubble is not eliminated, the flower droops and wilts within 12 hours.

Dahlias can be carried over from one year to another, and just around the time of the first frost, Cooper digs up the plants and lays them out in the garage to dry. Later he places them in a box and covers them with vermiculite to keep the tubers firm and unshrivelled during the winter in the coolest part of the basement.

In mid-March he separates them and lays them out until the "eye" (the center for new growth) sprouts. Once the eye shows, the tubers are again put into boxes of vermiculite, watered and moved into a warm, light place to commence a new season of growth. Sounds easy enough.

The other flower that dominates the Cooper garden is the tuberous begonia bed. Its splash of eye-catching color

can be seen from the terrace. The begonias are huge plants and loaded with blossoms and buds. Many of the buds are several years old and although horticultural literature claims that blooms from extra-large tubers are generally puny and that mere size of a tuber is not an indication of quality, Cooper said his tubers are unusually large, four or five inches across. Rarely does one see such fantastic flowers.

AS FOR CULTURAL hints in successful growing of these beauties, Cooper suggests pruning weaker stalks if several come up, so as to encourage sturdier growth, and fertilizing with either Peter's Fertilizer (18-18-18) or Fish Emulsion.

He also feels that people too often classify tuberous begonias as "shade" plants and that much of the failure people experience with them is due to improper placement. So if your tuberous begonias are large, lush and green, but without much bloom, next year place them in open filtered light. They need good air circulation and dappled light to look like these do.

In the midst of the profusion of these exotic blooms stands a defiant looking sunflower proud to be included in such fine company. A seed from the winter bird feeder had dropped and sprouted. Cooper, who "can't throw anything away," has given it the same tender loving care as the treasured tuberous begonias.

Indoor gardening and experimenting goes on year round at the Cooper



A Cooper family treasure, this Chinese evergreen's continued growth defies explanation. (Staff photo by Stephen Cantrell)

house. The breakfast room is always full of cuttings and young and some very old plants. Mrs. Cooper would like to do a little housekeeping and clear out the "geriatric" ward but she is very respectful of her husband's attachment to every plant. His office likewise is an extension of his home with many blooming streptocarpus and a huge bougainvillea—another reflection of his love of plants and the pleasures he derives from having them in his environment.

After years of playing "perpendicular golf" Cooper decided to

stop aggravating himself and instead turned to the relaxation of gardening. Gardening itself is enough for many people, but he frequently reflects on what it means to him. "I like to see how nature handles itself. I've learned so much just by looking very carefully and waiting patiently. Most people aren't at all aware of the sexuality of plant life, but it's there and the whole process of propagation is fascinating."

For Richard Cooper the joys of gardening reach into and enrich many aspects of his life.

**Culligan**

**SUPER STAR SALE**

Anne Henning, Olympic gold medalist & two-time Super Stars champion says...

**"IF YOU HAVE PROBLEM WATER..."**

- Hardness
- Sediment
- Iron
- Acidity
- Poor taste
- Bad odor

**Trade In Your Old Water Conditioner For A New Culligan And Get A Big Trade-In Allowance!**

Now, for a limited time, get rid of problem water with this Super Star bargain trade-in on a genuine, fully-automatic Culligan. Act now. Call and say—

**"HEY CULLIGAN MAN!"**

925 ORCHARD LAKE ROAD  
2 bks. E. of Telegraph-Pontiac

PONTIAC 334-9944 • 682-6600 DETROIT • 964-2246

Office hours 8-5 p.m. Sat. 8-1 p.m.  
Serving Wayne, Oakland and Macomb Counties



Leather, such as the baby lamb suede blouse shown here, has become highly desirable as a fashion item.

## Leather high on wanted list

Leather garments are popular in Michigan. The natural material keeps out the dampness and cold on rainy fall and snowy winter days and also makes beautiful coats which improve with age.

"Good leather coats can be worn for years and years," said Ken Eaton. "If they are cared for properly. They are easy to clean and because leather is strong, they are very durable."

But Eaton, the owner of the Leatherworks, a shop that specializes in leather goods, said most people don't know how to care for their leather garments.

"Suede requires so much care that I don't sell it in my shop," the Rochester shop owner stated. "I recommend people wear them until they're so dirty they can't clean them out. That's why I don't think people should spend more than \$100 for suede."

"Sheepskins and suedes should be sent to the cleaners for care but they don't necessarily need to be cleaned every year. If you brush off sheepskins so the water doesn't melt into the coat and brush the fur with a dog brush so it doesn't get matted, it

won't need to go to the cleaners as often.

"But don't wait to send it until it's too dirty to get clean or too matted to be fluffed again," Eaton stressed.

HE SAID most people make their mistakes caring for top grain leather garments.

Dry cleaning and leather don't go together, according to Eaton. He recommends home care since naked leathers don't require a protective finish.

The shop owner, who has been at 116 E. Fourth Street for two years, said if a preparation like saddle soap or mink oil is put on leather, it may dry out the material and change the garment's color.

Instead, he recommends washing leather with a mild solution of bar soap or Ivory liquid and water.

"Take the solution without many bubbles and wash large areas of the garment. For instance, wash the sleeves up to the shoulder. If the collar is dirty, wash the entire collar."

This solution will get off most stains, according to Eaton. He also recommended a gum eraser to re-

move markings such as ink marks.

If someone wants to try a cleaning preparation, Eaton said putting it on the leather inside the garment to see how it looks when it dries after 24 hours.

"If you can live with the garment the way the patch looks when it dries, then use it if you want. But often the leather may be a darker color or it may be drier."

EATON DOES recommend a product called mat leather care. He said if it is rubbed uniformly over a large area, the leather dries very close to its original texture, color and look.

"But I hate to be responsible for recommending a product," said Eaton. "I really don't support using products on leather goods."

A representative from Village Cleaners at 131 Main Street in Rochester said leather goods brought in by customers are sent to another city to be cleaned.

"We recommend having cowhides and suedes cleaned once a year. Sometimes the color will come back different. If that happens, we send them back and have them redyed."

Fine Furniture Since 1917

Visit Our Pennsylvania House Gallery

**CELEBRATING OUR 60TH ANNIVERSARY**

we offer a tremendous value from **STEARNS and FOSTER** in the **FIRM-QUILTED "Anniversary Special"**

**SAVE \$40 per set**

**\$59 ea.**  
twin mattress or box spring  
Reg. \$79.95 ea.

**SPECIAL CLOSE OUT**  
Stearns and Foster  
**QUEEN SETS**  
7 1/2 in. Matt-Discontinued Cover  
5 Bats in Stock  
**\$198 set** Reg. \$299 ea.

Stearns and Foster's Quality Bedding in Twin and Full size only—designed to give you support. The mattress is thickly quilted and has all the famous features: Proud border with Semi-Edge construction edges and heavy weight reinforced unit, reinforced for support. Locked edge inner Roll Keeps edges and surface well upholstered... Durable coil box spring.

Full Size Mattress or Box Spring \$79 ea. Reg. \$99 ea.

STEWART GLENN CO.  
"YOUR FULL SERVICE STORE"

has no extra charge for:  
• Careful Inspection & Set-Up  
• Courteous Delivery Service  
• Generous Outside Parking

Ask our Interior Designers to help you with your decorating problems.

Use our 4 Pay Plan (no interest) or use your MasterCard or BankAmericard

Distinctive American Traditional Furniture for the Home

**Colonial House of Furniture**

20292 Middlebelt (South of 8 Mile) LIVONIA 474-6900

Complete Banquet Facilities Available  
Parties of 20 to 200  
• Receptions • Meetings • Banquets • Office Parties  
BUFFETS AVAILABLE FROM \$6.95

**Cordoba**

29703 West Seven Mile Rd. at Middlebelt Livonia, Michigan 477-2686

We specialize in the best of hand and machine embroidery and monogramming

Furs Sweaters Dresses Men's Shirts Ladies Blouses and anything you need monogrammed

**Caterina**  
Embroidery Monograms

187 S. Woodward Rm. 202 Birmingham 645-1244 or 45

Open M-F 9-5 next to Little Professor Bookstore

**WOMEN'S SEMINAR "LIGHT MY CANDLE"**

September 22-23  
**KENWOOD CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
20200 Merriman Road Livonia, Michigan

Featured Lecturer-Dramatist  
Mrs. James B. (Glady) Smith of Newnan, Georgia

Special Music by **Caroleers Trio**

Thursday evening, Sept. 22, 7:30 p.m. "THE LIGHTER OF CANDLES"  
Reception and Dramatic Concert by Mrs. Smith

Friday morning, Sept. 23, 10:00 a.m. "THE SPIRIT—CONTROLLED WOMAN"

Friday, 12:00 Noon SALAD BUFFET  
Friday afternoon, 1:00 p.m. "ARISE AND SHINE"  
Friday evening, 5:30 p.m.

CATERED BANQUET DRAMATIC CONCERT BY MRS. SMITH (Tickets are \$3.50 for the Banquet and may be purchased from Mrs. Darrel Dean, 20201 Ormsu, Livonia, Michigan 48152. Reservations and money must be in by September 19.)

Friday evening, 7:30 p.m. "THE FRUIT OF THE LIGHT"  
The Seminar will close with a Candlelight Service.

**LOOSE RUG CLEANING**

pick-up and delivery

**Ferguson**

Carpet Cleaners  
32485 Schaeffert Livonia 525-1220

If you have had a mastectomy...

The RB Shops carries The Airway and Camp Prostheses, acknowledged two of the finest in the world. We also have prostheses night gown.

Free Parking

**THE RB SHOPS**  
Royal Oak (next to Royal Oak Theatre)

Call for Appointment  
**543-5100**

**1500 ELEPHANTS**

will **STAMPEDE**

**Birmingham**

**SEPT. 23RD!**

**lagniatsinsky**