

Plant collection should be carefully appraised

By MARGE ALPERN

Labor Day marks the beginning—not the end—of the gardening season for the greenhouse gardener.

The excitement of getting the structure and the equipment, let alone the plants, all set for the coming season makes fall an anticipatory time as early spring.

The major project in the next few weeks is to get the place cleaned up. Metal mesh bench tops that lift off easily certainly simplify greenhouse maintenance. After removing the plants from the bench, you can climb right into the bench space to wash the windows and aluminum frames.

A strong all purpose cleaner and a metal brush do a great job of removing the algae from the brick foundation wall on the inside as well as the outside.

Both greenhouse owners and indoor gardeners should take a critical look

at their entire collection at this time of year. Set high standards and cull out plants that don't measure up. Discard those old stragglers that detract from the beauty of your greenhouse or garden display. If they didn't shape up during the summer, the prime growing time, they probably never will.

INDOOR AND GREENHOUSE PLANTS that have been vacationing outside should be brought in now before the heat goes on. This allows them to gradually adjust to the new environment instead of being shocked with a sudden blast of artificial heat, causing them to drop their leaves.

Don't be alarmed if a few leaves do drop off as this is normal for many varieties. My large crown of thorns that grew several inches during the summer outside will drop many of its older leaves, exposing more of its rugged curving branches and enhancing its sculptural beauty.

Placed in a sunny window, it will continue blooming for several months. Some of the plants can still be left outside as they need the approaching cooler nights and sunny days to set their buds that will brighten the winter greenhouse. The Christmas cacti, camellias, azaleas, cyclamen and cymbidium orchids should be kept close to the house so that you can provide a little covering with newspaper or bed sheet if the night temperature is predicted to drop below freezing.

When you bring your Christmas or Thanksgiving cactus inside, remember that although it wants as much light as possible during the day, no artificial light should be allowed to reach it after the natural daylight fades. Don't overwater them. Once a week is usually adequate.

Now is a great time to visit our local garden centers that are full of exciting new plants to tempt you. Particularly appealing to me are the many miniatures which take up little space and

are no more difficult to grow than the standard forms from which they are derived.

Miniature violets and their close relatives, the simingia, are now being hybridized in even greater variety. The more recent cultivars seem somewhat harder and more floriferous than the earlier ones. It took me a long time to realize that these small geraniads must be kept on the dry side and that they require rather prolonged rest periods.

Don't be in too much of a hurry to move them into larger pots than they are in at the time of purchase. The extra soil holds too much water for the small root system to absorb and the resultant rotting happens almost overnight. Look for sinningia and ella (purple), pink ice and scarlet red.

Small leaf begonia, such as begonia boweri called "miniature eyelash," and a newer hybrid begonia red spider with its bright red veins are both

unusual and desirable plants. Many of the rex begonias have recently been "miniaturized" and the new offspring are just as interestingly marked as their parents.

There is an attractive new miniature maranta now available, called maranta green. Commonly called "prayer plants," marantas are fine greenhouse or house plants and will succeed in low light situations. There also is a new very small leaf philodendron which is true to its long heritage, does exceptionally well in low light.

If your garden is full of beautiful annuals that you'd like to rescue from their inevitable demise if left outside, consider carefully whether they can really continue blooming much longer or will just be straggly and unattractive.

Better to treat them as annuals and expendable. Take a few cuttings and start them over again, the results are much more satisfying and that's what the greenhouse allows you to do.



MARGE ALPERN

Sonny Eliot to narrate at Oakway's Cabaret

The cabaret concert, the Oakway Symphony Orchestra's most popular offering, will inaugurate the orchestra's sixth season.

The event begins at 8 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 7, in the Madonna College Activities Building at the corner of Schoolcraft and Levan, Livonia. It has been a sellout the last two seasons.

Guest artists will include soprano Rosemary Jackson, baritone "Pat Bob" Taylor, television personality Sonny Eliot and guest conductor Ernest A. Jones as well as conductor Francesco DiBlasi and the orchestra.

TAYLOR, who has become a radio

personality after starting his career as the "singing plumber," will be master of ceremonies. He will sing the aria "Di Provenza" from Verdi's "La Traviata" and join Miss Jackson in selections from Rodgers and Hammerstein's "South Pacific."

Miss Jackson will also perform the "Laughing Song" from Johann Strauss' "Fledermaus" and "Italian Street Song" from Victor Herbert's "Naughty Marietta."

She has performed in opera, theater and with orchestras, most recently with the St. Louis Symphony. She was a finalist in both the Metropolitan and American Opera auditions.

WEATHERMAN Eliot will narrate Allen Sherman's "Peter and the Comedian," a spoof of "Peter and the Wolf," accompanied by the symphony. A frequent Oakway guest conductor, Jones will lead the "Saber Dance" and other selections from Khachaturian's

"Gayne" ballet. There will be a trumpet solo of Leroy Anderson's "Bugler's Holiday."

Tickets are \$6 at the door. They may also be bought in advance at Hudson's Northland, Westland and Oakland malls; at Madonna College; and at

Hammel Music, Livonia. Tables of eight or 10 are \$48 and \$60 respectively. Bar service and sandwiches are available from 7-11 p.m.

Oakway receives support from the Michigan Council for the Arts.

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