

Artificial light gardens open new vistas

By RON BRENTON

Turn that dark corner in your living room, kitchen, basement, or utility room into an eternal spring-time garden. All it takes is a little imagination, a fluorescent light fixture or two, and a table or shelf.

Up until the late 1930's, indoor gardeners were limited to available windowsills, sunporches during the warmer months, or an expensive (both to build and to operate) greenhouse for growing houseplants. Those growing on windowsills were restricted to only a few inches of beneficial light space next to the glass; and if nature didn't cooperate, dull days hampered proper plant growth.

WITH THE ADVENT of fluorescent lights in the late 1930's, a new adventure developed for the indoor gardener. A world where eternal spring could be maintained by illuminating areas with artificial light. Regardless of the weather, plants could grow, bloom and

flourish with the aid of modern technology.

The first group of indoor gardeners to take advantage of fluorescent lights were the African violet enthusiasts. Lights suspended above shelves, in cabinets and other available space could now provide the necessary light for propagation and flowering of plants often thought difficult by many.

During the 1940's and '50's much work was done on the growing of plants under artificial light by various colleges and universities. Information became available that not only could African violets be grown under fluorescent lights but most other plants would grow well provided that time of illumination and intensity of light restrictions were met.

In the 1960's the Indoor Gardening Society of America was formed and with it came a new era of indoor gardening.

TODAY ALL ONE needs to do is



Besides being an expert on artificial light gardening, Ron Brenton also has a mail order business he calls "Marvelous Minis." Sometimes when the press of business gets ahead of him, Brenton calls on his family for help. Helping package the mini-African violets are his wife, Sue, and his two sons, Mark, 6, and

Brian, 9. Brenton developed his own method of packaging the delicate blooms by using styrofoam cups. He has over 250 varieties of "marvelous minis" for sale at \$1.25—or leaf cutting at 40 cents each. (Staff photo by Bob Woodring)

walk into a nursery, plant shop, or most variety stores to see plants of all descriptions growing contently under artificial light.

The first thing that crosses most peoples' minds is that this method of growing must be expensive. Initial setups can be made for as lit-

tle as \$20-\$25. A productive indoor light garden need be nothing more than a two-tube four-foot fluorescent fixture suspended above a shelf or a table.

The cost of the light fixture is about \$15 which includes two tubes. Adding a few plastic trays

and a timer to turn the lights off and on at predesignated times complete the set up. Total cost being about \$25.

A four-foot fixture provides about six square feet of growing space. This is enough room to grow (Continued on page 15)



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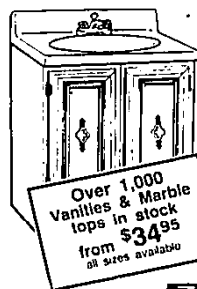
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