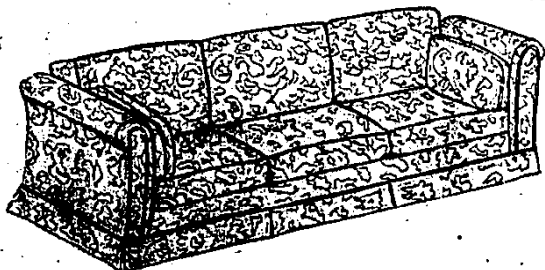


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April is busy month in the greenhouse

By MARGE ALPERN

April is the best month of the year in the home greenhouse to divide, pot, repot, start bulbs and seeds and experiment with new plants. Roots are quickly grown and young plants have all summer to get established.

Space is the major determinant as to how ambitious a program you plan for your spring greenhouse gardening. Plants that have finished blooming, like amaryllis, Christmas cactus, azelea, camellia and many orchids, can safely be denied their place in the sun on the bench for the next few months to make way for cuttings, seedlings or bulbs.

Examine your herbaceous plants including coleus, impatiens, begonia and wandering Jew. If they were carried over from last summer, you would be wise to take cuttings now to start new ones, and discard the old plants.

These plants, except for the fibrous begonia, root very easily from tip cuttings. Last summer's hanging basket of fibrous begonia by now has developed long nodulous stems and should be discarded. Instead of taking tip cuttings, however, the large clump of root

mass should be cut up and three or four sections of young basal growth used to start a new basket.

Pot, repot and divide succulents, orchids, rhizomatous begonias and ferns at this time. Keep them out of direct light for awhile and water cautiously until new root growth is evident.

Environmental conditions in the greenhouse have changed drastically as the welcome sunshine does its magic. If you are not cautious, however, it can quickly turn into "black magic," scalding tender foliage, burning tiny buds or desiccating root and root hairs. April is unpredictable and capricious and you have to be ready for her moods. Light, humidity and temperature must be judiciously controlled at this time.

Shading is necessary if the greenhouse faces south, southeast, southwest or west. If your shades are not up yet, keep a few rolls of cheese cloth handy to drape over tender plants that might otherwise burn. Better than that is to move plants that can't take intense sun rays.

Violets, streptocarpus and all the gesneriads will continue blooming now if they are either in a protected northern location or

close to the floor. If your streptocarpus goes totally limp from over exposure, don't be alarmed. After

Environmental conditions change drastically as the sunshine does its magic.

a day and a night in a shady cool location, it will firm up again.

Humidity drops suddenly as temperature rises, and it becomes more difficult to maintain the ideal 40 to 60 percent humidity. There

(Continued on page 23)

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