



The Green Thumb

By GEORGE ABRAHAM

Soil for porch boxes: Many home gardeners do not take enough pains to mix up a good batch of soil for their porch and window boxes.

Mix up a batch using 1/3 each of sand, peat and loam. A layer of peatmoss in the bottom is helpful in serving as a reservoir. If the soil is dug out of the garden, without any form of humus in it, chances are that drainage will be poor and your plants will be disappointing.

Here are some annuals which do well in porch and window boxes: ageratum, alysium, lobelia, nasturtium, petunias, salvia, marigolds, to name a few.

The old standards of geranium, petunia and others should be varied to include dusty miller, some vinca vine, or asparagus fern for greenery.

HOW TO CANDY VIOLET BLOSSOMS: I've been asked for a recipe for candying flowers. Here's a dandy sent to me by a reader:

Use one tablespoon of gum arabic, 1/4 cup water, 1/4 cup sugar, six tablespoons of water and one of corn syrup. Mix the gum arabic and 1/4 cup water. Heat over hot water until dissolved. Cool and then paint the flower petals with the mixture.

It will stiffen the petals. Use a small camel's hair brush. Combine sugar, corn syrup and six tablespoons of water. Cook to 240 degrees or medium ball stage. Cool, dip flowers and let stand in order to dry on paper. Not all flowers can be candied successfully.

Candied mint leaves are easy to do. For the candied rose petal recipe, try this: One cup fresh rose petals, 1/4 teaspoon water, one egg white (beaten), add granulated sugar.

Pick the rose petals in early morning when wet with dew. Wash carefully in cold water. Allow to dry on absorbent paper. Add 1/4 teaspoon cold water to white of one egg; beat well. Dip flowers in egg white, then in sugar. Place on waxed paper to dry. May be eaten immediately.

To keep crisp, place in tightly covered jar. Large

Remodeling Meets Needs

Does it pay to remodel? Many architects agree that it often does and that it can be a happier solution to a family's housing problems than moving.

Walter Ramberg, Baltimore architect, recently said that by the time people have lived in a house for some years, they have a pretty accurate idea of their needs. They know what the space is working for and where it isn't.

If homeowners are warned, however, that it's best to work with experienced professionals in planning a remodeling or addition.

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Start In Mid-May For Mums In Fall

It may seem a bit early to think about fall flowers, but mid-May is the best time to plant chrysanthemum rooted cuttings in Michigan.

According to William Carlson, Michigan State University horticulturist, rooted cuttings can be planted after the danger of frost is past.

He advises that mums need plenty of sun. When you've found the right spot, and have cuttings 4 inches high with strong stems and one-inch roots, you're ready to plant.

Soak the cutting in water five minutes before planting or until the foliage is firm again. Dig a hole an inch deeper and wider than the roots. After you've set the cutting, firm the roots by pushing the soil

toward the stem. Water heavily immediately after planting and check for wilting on sunny days.

Carlson recommends planting the cuttings 18 to 24 inches apart. As they grow, the mums will fill in the empty spaces. This spacing also helps cut down the danger of leaf disease the horticulturist adds.

IN CARING for the plants during the summer, water to a depth of 4 inches, but avoid wetting the leaves of the plant. If the stems droop, loosely tie the plants to a stake, forming a figure eight with the string.

Unless you pinch the branches, mums tend to grow straight and tall with few flowers.

Pinching back the growing tip allows other branches to form, giving a bushier plant.

Pinch the growing tip each time it's added four to six inches to the total plant height, but, pinch off only one half to one inch of the new growth.

Stop pinching on an early bloomer about July 15, and on a late bloomer about Aug. 1. Start cultivating the soil the week after plants are set out. Continue this job every week. Be careful not to damage the

roots. If you don't like hoeing, Carlson advises a mulch. Mulch when the soil is moist and all the growing weeds have been removed. He suggests hay, straw, pine needles or even dried grass clippings.

Apply a layer one to two inches deep. Clipping off faded flowers from the plants keep them better looking and also cut down on plant diseases.

TO GET the plants ready for winter, cut them back to three or four inches when flowers and foliage start turning brown. When the top several inches of soil is frozen, apply a straw mulch three to four inches deep. Then next spring, about April 1, remove half the

mulch and loosen the remainder. Don't take the rest of the mulch off until early May.

"When the growth is about 1 1/2 inches high, dig the plant up. Shake off most of the soil, and cut off the side shoots with roots attached."

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