

Gourds make colorful accents

Writers visit store

Cranbrook Gardens Auxiliary will have its 15th annual fall plant-sale 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday, Oct. 30, and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 31. Many house plants, ferns, orchids, tropicals, succulents and bulbs will be available. Auxiliary members have been busy making eye-catching wreaths and other items for this sale. Baskets, garden sculpture, spices, jellies and even herb bread will entice buyers. Catch the shuttle from Christ Church parking lot on Lane Pine Road in Bloomfield Hills to attend this important event at the newly refurbished greenhouse. All proceeds benefit Cranbrook Gardens and Cranbrook Educational Community.

Now is the time to visit farmers markets for late fall produce — including gourds. Small gourds are a fun addition to many fall arrangements and need some special attention to preserve them.

Wipe the gourds with a soft cloth dampened in rubbing alcohol, Lysol or vinegar and water. Lay on newspapers and dry them in a well-ventilated room. Turn daily and change the papers — don't let them touch. This will take about a week.

I HAVE found that several needle punctures in the end of the gourds will hasten the inner drying process. They can now be put in a warm, dark area and turned occasionally. A mold or crust may develop, but they can be washed in warm water (use steel wool to remove the crust) and dried with a soft cloth.

When the gourds are dry they will be lightweight and the seeds will rattle. You may leave the gourds in their natural state or wax them with a paste wax. They can also be stained or dyed, varnished or painted, or even decorated with a wood-burning tool. This might be a wonderful fall project for a group of children.

Gourds must be thoroughly dry before storing to ensure several years of use because if any moisture is left, most likely the result will be mildew and disappointment when the gourds are to be used at another time.

Here are some tips for harvesting and storing winter vegetables whether you "gather them in" at the farmers market or from your own gardens.

As the vines begin to die on the pumpkins and winter squash, cut the stems two or three inches from the fruits and let the fruit dry in the sun for several days. Don't let them get wet or suffer frost damage — hope they haven't already with the cold spell we had. A dry, well-ventilated room that stays between 50 and 60 degrees is ideal. Zucchini and other summer squash can't be stored in this manner.

As the tops of onions begin to yellow, bend them over to speed the drying process. Dig the crop after all the tops have turned brown. They should cure in the sun for several days and then the tops should be cut off to one inch and the onions put in mesh bags. Hang in a cool, dark,



down to earth

Marty Figley

well-ventilated storage area.

Potatoes should be stored in well-ventilated crates and kept in a dark humid place with a temperature of about 40 degrees. I have an old water barrel from the railroad which is ideal for this purpose.

Other root crops do well stored in

boxes filled with moist sand. Check periodically for dryness and sprinkle with water to prevent shriveling. Parsnips can be left in the ground and dug as needed if they have been covered with a heavy mulch.

When you carve your Halloween pumpkin, toast the seeds for a snack.

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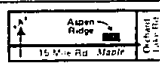
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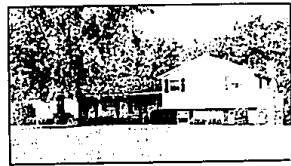
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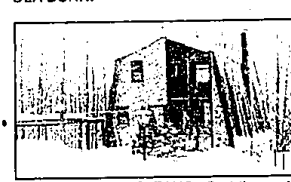
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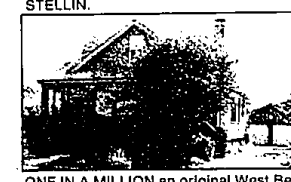
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