Pianist to give recital

Flavio Varani, pianist, will be the guest artist for the opening concert of the Julius Chajes Series at 8 p.m. Saturday in the Aaron Deroy Theater of the Jewish Community Center, Maple at Drake, West Bloomfield. His program will be music by Schumann, Ravel, Chajes, Rachmaninoff and Granados. Varani, a native of Brazil, graduate of the Juilliard School, is artist-in-residence at Oakland University. He is an active soloist and chamber musician in Europe, South America and Europe. For ticket information, call Annette Chajes, 661-1000, ext. 335.

Christmas rose blooms in snow

down to earth

Marty Figley

The Christmas Rose may seem to be an unusual topic for September, but this is the time to put it in the garden for optimum growth.

If you are already growing the Christmas Rose it is best divided in the fall when it is blooming. It takes a while to come to full maturity; it is well worth the wait.

This plant with shiny green leaves has beautiful delicate-looking, pure, white blossoms in the cold winter months that peek through snow drifts like bright silver dollars.

The Christmas Rose (Hellebore niger altifolius), which sometimes begins to bloom in November and continues through March, emerges from waxy leather-like leaves that seem to grow directly from the ground with no stem.

The tight bud emerges and as the stem grows, that protective wrapper helps to acclimate it to the cold weather. The bud turns toward the strongest light at a right angle to the stem and then opens to reveal the flower.

DEPENDING ON WEATHER and temperature, as the flower matures, it may assume shadings of pink, rose or purple. It changes even more as the season progresses. In Austria and Germany, it is known as the snow rose, Schneerosen.

Hellebores are not roses at all. They are the buttercup (Crowfoot) family and come to us from Europe and Asia. Abnormal characteristics are not uncommon in buttercups, thus members of the Hellebore family have variations in leaf and petal structures.

Choose a site where the lovely blossoms can be enjoyed from a window on a cold winter day. A permanent location should be chosen as the roots can grow long and deep. Care should be taken if transplanting is necessary. An east exposure near buildings or shrubs is ideal.

It likes to be planted under an existing bush or shrub and sheltered from severe west and north winds in the winter and from hot sun in the summer. The compact growth of the Christmas Rose, in mounds 6-8 inches high, makes for a neat ornamental plant suitable for edging a stone walk, in rock gardens and in front of plantings of low shrubs. It also works well with ground covers such as myrtle, spurge and low ferns.

PLANT ONE OR MORE of these interesting flowers in a bed of well-drained, rich soil that has been cultivated to a depth of 18 inches. Work in a generous amount of bonemeal. If more than one plant is put in the bed, place them about a foot apart so that the leaves will grow more p-right, which encourages the flower stems to grow longer.

After planting, water well and continue to water while the plants are actively growing. These plants, besides being cold-hardy, can withstand drought in the summer, as that is the natural dormancy period.

Unless the summer weather is extremely hot and dry, watering will not be necessary. Very little attention is needed through the year. Although tempting as foliage for indoor arrangements, the evergreen leaves produce the energy for the next flower crop so they shouldn't be picked.

I hope you can find a spot in your garden for this unique flower and enjoy its lovely beauty for many years.

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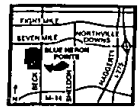

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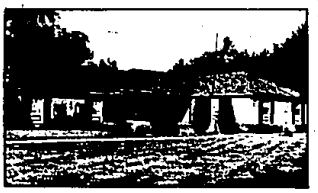

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