



UNUSUAL SANDBOX provides a sun-shaded play area with weather-protected pockets for toy storage. Plywood and canvas shade adjusts to the angle of the sun and when lowered, doubles as a protective cover for keeping out pets. For construction plans send 25 cents to the American Plywood Association, 1119 A St., Tacoma, Wash. 98401. Ask for Form 54-440.



The avocado or alligator pear we get in the supermarket comes from Florida, California, Santo Domingo and Puerto Rico.

You can judge the ripeness this way: If fruit "gives" or feels soft to the touch, it's ready to eat. Pinching or poking will bruise it, cause dark spots. If it feels like a stone, take it home to ripen. Put fruit in a brown paper bag and it'll ripen inside bag by giving off ethylene gas.

Don't put it in refrigerator. If you use avocado in salad, a bit of lemon in the dressing prevents the flesh from darkening. Store pieces in waxed paper. There are two ways to start

an avocado tree from seed or pit. Some have good luck with seed in plain tap water and a glass. After you remove the flesh, wash the pit (seed) with warm water. NOT COLD WATER. Sometimes the halves have started to split when you buy them in the store. Do not entirely separate them as there's a vital thread between them and if it's broken, the seed's germinating power may be hurt.

Thrust toothpicks in middle of seed and suspend seed over glass of water, base down. Top can be differentiated from bottom of seed easily. Base has a

dimple in it, and usually the top is tapered.

Do not put entire seed in a glass of water as it causes a scum to form, just the base.

Another method is to start the seed in a pot of peaty soil. Set seed in so that upper half is exposed. Water with warm water, but do not keep soil soggy wet. After germination keep in a bright window at room temperature.

TROUBLES: Bare stem with only a few leaves on top. Cut the top out and eventually new buds will come from the stalk and plant will be bushier.

A YELLOW CUCUMBER: Once in a while home gardeners are surprised to find they have a cucumber vine which produces fruit the size and color of a large lemon.

This happens through a strange quirk of nature, and it can also be due to a seed mixup. There is cucumber variety known as "Lemon" and it is not only a real cucumber, but grows like a large lemon. Inside flesh is white and it has a remarkable sweet flavor, quite different from other cucumbers. Good for slicing and pickling.

GREEN THUMB CLINIC: A reader writes: "Please tell us what can be planted under our dense maple tree. Grass won't grow there."

Answer: I doubt if anything will grow under a dense shade tree. Put patio blocks underneath, or use a gravel mulch to make the area look neat. We've tried everything under a dense Maple and nothing thrives there. If any gardener has had good luck growing plants under a shade tree, please write us.

Mulching Ends Vacation Time Weed Worries

If you do a good job of mulching, you can enjoy your vacation without worrying about weeds taking over your garden, advises a Michigan State University horticulturist.

"Mulch provides other benefits as well," says J. Lee Taylor. It conserves soil moisture, prevents soil puddling, keeps fruit clean, helps maintain uniform soil temperatures, and organic mulches gradually release plant nutrients as they decompose.

Consider black plastic for mulching vegetables and flowers, suggests Taylor. Black plastic is used mainly with plants grown in hills or spaced apart such as melons, squash, pumpkins, cucum-

bers, tomatoes and strawberries. It should not be used with cool season crops such as broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, or peas unless it is covered with sawdust or other material to reflect light, points out Taylor.

If your garden soil needs improving, organic materials might be better than plastic for mulching. But try to avoid organic materials that contain a lot of weed seeds, warns the horticulturist.

APPLY HAY and straw mulches three to four inches deep for best results, recommends Taylor. Two inches of ground corn cobs, sawdust or shavings provide adequate mulching, too.

Mulching materials such as straw, chopped corn cobs and sawdust are often low in nitrogen and may cause nitrogen deficiencies in the soil. The mulch then competes with your vegetables and flowers for available soil nitrogen.

To remedy this, add some nitrogen fertilizer. A half pound of ammonium sulfate or one-third pound of ammonium nitrate per 100 square feet of mulched area provides adequate nitrogen.

If straight nitrogen fertilizers aren't available, apply one pound of a complete fertilizer, such as 10-6-4 or 12-12-12, per 100 square feet. This should keep soil nitrogen levels from dropping after a hazard all their own.

Rough and splintered rails offer a hazard all their own.

Loose balusters should be tightened by driving nails at an angle at their base. There may be filler strips of wood between balusters. Carefully remove these before nailing, then replace.

Rough and splintered rails offer a hazard all their own.

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32x24	Double Hung	24x32
32x16	Reg. 29.65	24x28
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1/4-4x8	3.39	3.79
3/8-4x8	4.49	4.79
1/2-4x8	6.79	6.29
5/8-4x8	6.79	7.29
3/4-4x8	7.69	8.39

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