

Carefree Geraniums Are Bigger And Better

By BETTY FRANKL
Special Writer

Have you noticed that geraniums are growing bigger and better than ever these days?

For generations, in fact ever since they were first introduced into cultivation in England in the 18th century, geraniums have been loved for their bright blooms. They are sturdy, dependable plants that are equally at home in a garden bed or in a pot on a window sill.

Recently, though, the old favorites have been improved and the new geraniums, known as carefree geraniums, really are bigger and better. The plants are sturdier, bushier and larger and they produce more flowers.

Though, lies in the fact that these carefree geraniums can be grown from seeds.

Formerly the geraniums you bought from the nursery or florist were propagated from cuttings. The branches of a mature plant were cut off and rooted

and when the new plants were established the growing tips were snipped off to encourage branches to form.

It was a slow and laborious procedure for a grower, but the only way to provide a stock of the desired kinds of geraniums.

They could not be raised from seeds because the voracious varieties had a mix parentage and didn't "come true" from seeds. Also, many hybrids tended to produce sterile seeds that did not germinate.

A few years ago there was a breakthrough in geranium breeding and a new group of hybrids was produced that were big and beautiful, flowered well and for a long time - and the seeds yielded plants just like the parents.

These carefree geraniums are what is known as an "F1 Hybrid." The creation of an "F1 Hybrid" is a fascinating process. Basically the procedure involves three steps.

The first is to choose the parent stock and inbreed each parent by self-pollination for four, five or more generations. Next, crosses are made between different in-bred parents. These are observed and tested and the desirable ones selected. Often hundreds of crosses are made before one of merit results.

Once a desirable cross that produces a superior plant has been made, it must be repeated each time to obtain the "F1 Hybrid" seed. This insures uniformity, the unique vigor that is a characteristic of first generation plant hybrids.

Also one with rose colored flowers with a white throat in the center of each blossom.

There is light pink, bright pink and white with a pink edge, light salmon, deep salmon, pure white, crimson red, bright scarlet, and a true clear red. Bright pink,

scarlet and deep salmon have all won "all-American selection" awards.

These carefree geraniums can be expected to grow 18 inches or more in height.

However, there are also some dwarf F1 hybrid geraniums. There is a group known as Little Big Blobs

that have large flower heads on plants that are less than six inches in height. These make interesting edging plants, and are unexcelled in flower pots.

Another dwarf F1 hybrid is an award winner called Spritzer, which was first introduced this year. It has

bright scarlet red blooms and is reported to begin blooming earlier and produce more blooms than any other geranium.

All the large-flowered geraniums, whether the older types or the new hybrid need a sunny location to flower well. They will grow well in

most any ordinary garden soil.

Too much nitrogen in the soil induces a rank leafy growth and few flowers. To aid flower production use a fertilizer that has equal amounts of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium.



THIS DINING ROOM has an unusual mix of styles and materials. An Oriental rug in Karastan's Kirman pattern covers the wide expanse of floor in tones of rose, ivory and blue. The table and breakfast have a natural elm finish while the Chippendale-inspired chairs sport white lacquer. A mirror-like gold wallcovering gives the room a shimmer.

Summer Insect Pests Destroy Ornamentals

Ornamentals and trees can take a beating from troublesome July insect pests in this part of the country.

Most common are leaf hoppers and plant bugs which attack honey locusts; and the fall webworm, which attacks 120 different ornamentals and trees and is especially fond of oak, birch, linden (basswood), ash and apple trees.

The leaf hopper and plant bug are dark brown to green insects about one-fourth inch long that suck juices from

leaves causing honey locust leaflets to drop, reports Bill Walner, Michigan State University extension entomologist. You can detect them by shaking tree branches and forcing the insects into flight.

To control these pests, Walner recommends carbaryl (Sevin), malathion or diazinon. Follow spray rates on the labels.

The webworm larvae, which are pale yellow to light green and covered with whitish hairs, spin a silken web over branches and feed inside that web. They first appear in mid-July and can completely defoliate a limb or tree, says Walner.

This Tree House Is Easy On Trees

When available trees are inadequate to support a play structure, a combination tree house-jungle gym can be built of standard dimension lumber to satisfy children's

top of the posts, and 2x4-inch "joists" support a platform of exterior-grade plywood.

The 4x8-foot play structure is built on four 4x4-inch posts, either adjacent to or surrounding a tree trunk, so that nails aren't driven into the tree and it doesn't have to support any weight.

Three-foot sections of 2x6s bolted upright to the corner posts support a railing. Variations are possible, such as a sunshade roof or enclosing the railings for a private "club house."

Corner posts are set in two feet of concrete and rise to six feet above ground.

Ladders are added easily with 2x4s and either 2x2s or one-inch dowels for rungs.

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Wilting Caused By Caterpillars

Vegetable and flower garden plants that show signs of wilting may have been attacked by the common stalk borer, according to Michigan State University entomologist Richard Sauer.

The pest, says Sauer, is a caterpillar that bores into any plant it can chew. Weeds are the caterpillar's favorite food, but it will attack vegetable and flower plants if no weeds are present.

Identifying the caterpillar is simple. It has a reddish-brown band around the middle part of the body,

which distinguishes it from most of the other caterpillars.

The best control, Sauer contends, is to keep weeds out of your gardens. Garden sprays or dusts used regularly will also help to keep this pest from destroying your plants.

Cool Off With Arbor

A shady spot can be created in a sunny yard with addition of a simple rectangular post-and-beam arbor or pergola.

Posts of 4x4-inch heart cedar set in the ground six to eight feet apart support beams of paired 2x4s. Across the beams, bbs are set edge and spaced to form the trellis top.

Douglas fir and western cedar lumber are popular choices for outdoor projects, and may be stained or sealed and left to weather naturally.

Now is the time to fertilize late tomatoes with nitrogen, suggests Lee Taylor, extension horticulturist at Michigan State University.

Fertilize Tomatoes Now

"Fertilizing now gives plants that extra boost," he says. "Almost all plants at this stage will have little tomatoes on them and it is safe, therefore, to fertilize with high nitrogen."

Change Oil When Warm

The best time to get an oil change is after a car engine has been heated to normal operating temperatures, according to auto experts. Hot oil flows easier and also removes sediment before it can settle back into crankcase recesses.

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