

Inventive teacher turns kids on to houseplants

By CORINNE ABATT
"Sprouts for Sprouts," a course offered in the Farmington Community Center, is a different approach to one of the country's fastest growing hobbies—houseplants.

The class, taught by inventive instructor Mrs. Pat Borden, of Farmington Hills, is designed for pre-school-

ers and their mothers, and Mrs. Borden has, quite literally, a whole pot full of ideas that turn kids into pin-size horticulturalists who quickly learn to plant seeds, grow and care for them and, in the process, develop a deeper appreciation for themselves.

"One of the important things which a child has to obtain is a really good

self-image," says Mrs. Borden who is presently working on a master's degree in early childhood education at Oakland University.

"I STARTED the class because I wanted to teach and I like growing things. It is taught from the point of view of actually growing things. I didn't think there were enough things for families to share as a whole."

She continues talking as she helps her two daughters, Helene, 5, and Amy, 3, who are at work on a planting project at the kitchen table.

"This gives a family something in common. Each can come in at his own level."

Mrs. Borden has a plastic container of dirt on the table which is spread with newspapers. Each of the girls has a scoop of the dirt used for coffee, an eye dropper and a small container of water.

As each carefully fills an old tennis shoe with dirt, Mrs. Borden comments, "I always try to avoid using anything that isn't readily accessible. The eye droppers are from old vitamin bottles and those little yellow water containers are the tops from spray cans. I save all my old milk cartons, egg cartons and egg shells."

She explains she tries to break the eggs she uses to save half or more of the shells.

Having filled the shoes with dirt and moistened it with countless squeaks from the eye droppers, Amy and Helene are now ready to plant grass seed in the tennis shoes. Their mother opens the quart jar with the seed and each child takes a handful to scatter in the dirt.

Before the project is completed they will decorate the tennis shoes with Magic Markers in various colors and put their initials on the side.

"In all the things we do in class, the child is in control, manipulates the materials and does the projects himself."

The girls complete the shoe project and decide they would like to plant the egg shells after painting faces of family and friends on several. Once the dirt is carefully put in, not quite to the edge to allow room to water, the grass seed is added. When it sprouts, the egg shell faces will have a thick coat of green hair.

Mrs. Borden talks as she sets up the equipment for the girls.

"First, my projects have to be fun. If they aren't fun we don't do them. Working with dirt and seeds is a very satisfying experience."

She takes precautions to make certain it is satisfying, explaining that seeds grow better and faster in good, rich, sterile dirt. So that is the only kind she will use.

She chooses seeds which sprout very quickly, grass, lima beans, radishes, carrots which are grown for the enjoyment of seeing them sprout, not for utilitarian purposes.

"The best success comes with good dirt. We want to put a seed in dirt and see it grow, and I want it to grow fast. Good dirt will do that."

In her list of fast growing seeds, Mrs. Borden includes birdseed advising that not knowing what to expect "is the fun of it."

IN HER CLASSES, Mrs. Borden points out the similarities between the care and nurturing that helps a seed grow and the child's own life. She also uses the differences in plants as an illustration for life.

"I point out that people are different from each other just as plants are different from each other."

The girls talk as they work, Helene commenting that the last time she planted grass with her egg shell family, "My grass grew very fast."

She also tells her mother, "I'm having fun," as she carefully puts dirt in a milk carton split the long way. Soon, she will put grass seed on the dirt, the design of the initial of her first name and write her name on the outside of the planter.

"This interest," her mother says, "helps promote language encounters. It's a terrific way to have conversation and the child is introduced to many new words. For instance one word we use a lot as we plant is 'delicate' to describe how we handle seeds."

To illustrate her point that house plants need not be expensive, she shows the pineapple top she is growing, the avocado from a seed and the carrot which she has turned into a hanging basket.

Mrs. Borden taught an enrichment course in plants for first graders at Westchester Elementary School in Birmingham and had a course for older children at the community center.

In each case, the response has been gratifying, the children, from the youngest, quickly learn to identify the seeds and cultivate an appreciation

for all growing things.

Cinematography is another hobby of Mrs. Borden and her first movie was of Amy and Helene completing a planting project. She frequently shows it to the children in her classes and the response has been good.

She plans to continue her movie making, her teaching and her work on a master's degree. In among these she mixes walks in the country with the girls to find leaves and identify trees.

Mrs. Borden is married to attorney Stuart Borden, who shares many of the family interests.



Helene Borden, 5, is an enthusiastic plant grower who has a gentle touch with seedling plants. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)



Three-year-old Amy Borden carefully taps down the dirt in the shoe-turned-planter. Her mother teaches a class for green thumb pre-schoolers and their mothers. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

Leather goods shop is western lover's paradise

Row upon row of leather boots compete for attention with western gear and square dance equipment. Prefaded jeans and leather patch jackets hang next to a stack of saddles waiting to be repaired. Bull ropes, cinches and saddle bags are nailed around the front door, making it impossible to enter the store from Grand River.

Looking around the clutter of boxes and merchandise in his leather shop, Scott Colburn grinned. "They would throw this out of Northland!"

The clutter almost hides the leather repair area at the front of the store. English and Western saddles are stored on shelves or are stacked on the railing which sets the workshop off from the rest of the store.

DAVE THORBURY learned to repair leather goods by taking his father's saddles apart. "He wouldn't know until I finished," Thornbury remembers. "I would hide everything when he came home."

Next to his workbench, Thornbury displays the saddle he made. The camel-colored saddle with a basket-weave pattern stamped into the leather took him a month to finish. "I wanted to get it done."

Each weave in the pattern was stamped by hand giving the design more depth than a machine stamped design.

table made for square dance parties can be turned off while the record is still under the needle and can play on slanted surfaces. A turntable monitor and two speakers can cost \$12,000. Colburn said.

Colburn started out as a square dance caller in the '50s. On one job, he brought an assortment of Western style ties. They sold out. He added shirts, dresses records and books to his stock and opened a small store in the basement of his home. When business progressed, he moved to the basement of a store before moving into his

present location on Grand River near Farmington Road in 1964.

Colburn hesitates to call his shop a Western store, but he is unable to offer a better description. "We stock casual dress without elaborate styling," he says.

"We've been coming here for years," Mrs. Joan Crane of Farmington said. "My children liked to come in here to smell the leather and look at the saddles. It's a good place for Levi's." She pulled a pearl-buttoned western shirt off the rack. "I can find shirts for my son here."

"A shirt with pearl snaps isn't that odd anymore," Colburn said.



Dave Thornbury and Scott Colburn (right) work on a saddle at Colburn's leather shop on Grand River in Farmington. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

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