

Tips on how to select summer flower bulbs

Now is the time to decide about your summer flowering bulbs and depending on your flower choice, you can start planting as early as January.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has a booklet that gives you tips on how to select and care for summer flowering bulbs so you'll be a successful gardener. For a copy of "Summer Flowering Bulbs" send 25 cents to Consumer Information Center, Dept. 62, Pueblo, Colorado 81009.

Here are some highlights for you: Select healthy, mature bulbs. This means a bulb that is firm and with an unblemished skin.

If you buy bulbs before planting time, keep them in a cool, dry area. A temperature of 60 to 65 degrees is cool enough to prevent most bulbs from drying out until you plant them.

Before you prepare the new flowerbed, test the drainage of the soil. Dig a hole about a foot deep and fill it with water. The next day, fill the hole with water again, and see how long it remains. If the water drains away in 8 to 10 hours, the soil will drain well enough for planting. If the water stays in the hole after 10 hours, you'll need to improve the drainage. You can do this by digging furrows along the sides of the future flower bed, and adding the soil from the furrows to the bed.

Dig and plant your flowerbeds when the soil is fairly dry. Wet soil packs tightly and retards plant growth.

m.m.memos

For fantasy reading, I occasionally glance into one of those magazines on home furnishings.

They are uplifting. I find, if I can ignore their counter-effect as a depressant. For while I admire the lovely pictures of the Home Beautiful, I keep making mental comebacks to our Home Lived-In.

One thing the furnishing experts often advise is an unusual focal point in a room's decor. Our rooms tend to focus on such objects as a French horn or a stray pile of schoolbooks or pair of shoes.

BUT FOR A TIME, our dining room had a real conversation-piece focal point. It was a spread-out jigsaw puzzle and it stayed on the table four weeks before we succeeded in putting it together.

I should explain that jigsaw puzzles have been part of Christmas for several years now. Since the holiday is for us a stay-at-home one, and since we all enjoy puzzles, it seemed a reasonable family gift.

This year, though, Santa picked a lovely woodland scene in 1,000 bits and pieces. That's what the box said, anyway. I personally am sure it was closer to 2,000.

ANYWAY, our youngest stayed true to form and got the border mainly piece to piece Christmas afternoon. Then we varied our custom and went grandparent-visit-

ing the next day everyone was busy most of the time. And the next. And the next. By the time a week had passed and our cleaning lady was due, I wondered what to do about the puzzle that was still very slow to take form.

We decided to leave it for a week but another cleaning day rolled around, and the puzzle still wasn't done. The member of the family who had returned to college took to beginning her telephone calls home with an inquiry into the puzzle's togetherness.

I ISSUED an edict. It had to be done before the next cleaning day. Our chief puzzle engineer said, "Well, O.K., take it apart." But guess who couldn't bear to do so, and guess who started wasting more time than could be spared on that darned puzzle!

In the end, a flu bug saved us. The day before the final deadline, our youngest turned up with a sore throat. She stayed home from school, and by the time her throat was cured, the puzzle was complete.

Now we know again what the table top looks like. But I must start looking around for next year's Christmas puzzle.

Margaret Miller

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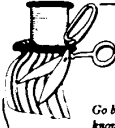


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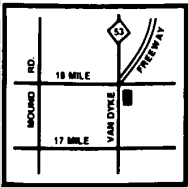
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