The Green Thumb

By GEORGE ABRAHAM

Few vines are more handsome than the wisteria (also spelled Wisteria), and few are more obstinate when it comes to blooming. Is there any way to force a wisteria into blooming?

Some tricks include digging a foot-deep trench around the base of the plant (3 feet away) and replacing the soil with poorer soil, since too rich a soil discourages blooming.

Another trick consists of ringing the bark to induce flowering. For many years orchardists have used this trick to induce fruit trees to bear. Stubborn plants such as wisteria have been forced into bloom by ringing.

All you do is to take a sharp jackknife and cut a circle around the stem. Do this two or three times, each cut being about an inch or so apart. Just cut into the bark until you hit the hard wood. Do not remove any bark, and don't worry if the cuts bleed sap for a couple of days.

The time you ring is important. For example, you can ring the plants about two weeks after their normal flowering time. What the ringing does is this: it causes an accumulation of carbohydrates, which stimulates the plants into flowering.

It should be mentioned there are other reasons why plants do not blossom, and ringing will not correct them. Non-flowering can be due to poor weather, lack of pollination, too much shade, too much nitrogen, to name a few.

* * *

MAGIC LILY CARE: The so-called Magic Lily, sometimes called Hardy Amaryllis or Autumn amaryllis is known correctly as Lycoris squamigera. It has green, strap-like leaves appearing in spring, then these die down and completely disappear by June. In August, lavender spikes of flowers (2 to 3 feet long) and fragrant, pop up out of the ground. While a poor keeper in vase arrangements, magic lily does make a worthwhile perennial. Failure to bloom is due to deep planting or overcrowding. Separate the bulbs in spring or fall.

Partition Controls Open Space

The divide and conquer rule can be applied to unmanageable open space in basement or garage.

Control is accomplished by construction of one or more partitions that are within the skills of any home handyman, suggests John Concord, home improvement consultant.

The do-it-yourselfer can begin by determining the best locations for partitions. Next step would be installation of sill and ceiling plates to form a frame for the partition.

Two-by-fours anchored by both floor and ceiling will provide an adequate frame. The length of the two-by-four plates will, of course, determine the length of the partitions.

When additional framing, or studs, are attached to the plates and spaced 16 inches apart, paneling can begin.

* * *

PREFINISHED hardboard paneling goes up over the studs, and Concord recommends general purpose adhesive for the best results. The adhesive is easy to use, and eliminates the necessity and bother of nails that can spoil the final appearance.

Prefinished panels come in a variety of woodgrains and patterns and are dent and wear resistant. They also are ideal for installation over furred concrete or block walls if it is the homeowner's intention to finish the rooms for functional living.

"Shaping up your basement by installing attractive partitions and then devoting the smaller rooms to specific purposes can be like adding a two or three-room apartment to your home," the home improvement expert believes.

TORCH (LEFT) and Rosy Future (right) are two newcomers to the roster of Zenith zinnia varieties. Torch has rich orange flowers. Rosy Future's blooms are bright rose-pink.

Forget-Me-Nots Are Good Mixers

Anchusa tolerates poor soil but needs sun to bloom best. Plants will flower all summer from seeds sown in spring.

The variety Blue Bird is a favorite. It has 1/4-inch flowers in clusters at the tip of the main stem and each side shoot. Each blue bloom is centered with white.

Stems are 18 inches long. When cut for indoor use, plunge the cut stems immediately into water.

Anchusa is a good "mixer." It goes well with all other flowers. Seedlings transplanted from the seedbed or row can be set in groups in a border to fill in the areas where bulbs bloomed earlier.

Summer forget-me-not is the common name for anchusa. True forget-me-nots bloom with the tulips.

Decorating Tip For Fireplace

An out-of-style fireplace can be modernized at small expense. Various companies offer simple wood mantels that are carefully designed and well constructed. They needn't be expensive.

To further enhance the fireplace area, include shelves and cabinets that are flush with the projecting fireplace for the modern look. It's a good idea, too, to include an accent wall as a background.

An ideal material is prefinished hardboard paneling with the rich appearance of travertine marble.

Available at lumber and building supply yards, these panels will provide a striking wall for your modernized fireplace.

Lakeowners, Rid Waters Of Weeds

Lakeowners who find their waters made unsightly by weeds should spray or cut the unwanted vegetation, advises a Michigan State University aquatic weed specialist.

Vernie Knudson, assistant professor in MSU's Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, says the most conspicuous nuisance weeds are the emergent plants which grow above the water level. These include: cattails, reeds, bulrushes and sedges, which not only interfere with the view, but also reduce the size of the lake, and interfere with water recreation.

"Cattails may be sprayed with dalapon or amitrol-T in August," says Knudson. "The spray should be mixed: four ounces of dalapon to one gallon of water or two ounces of amitrol-T to one gallon of water. About 20 pounds of spray should be applied per acre, but the main object is to wet the foliage completely. A tablespoon of liquid detergent should be added to every four gallons of water to prevent the spray from beading and rolling off the waxy leaves.

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