

The Green Thumb

By GEORGE ABRAHAM

Care of peony bushes: If your peony plants started to bud out last spring and failed to open, chances are the trouble was due to Borlytis blight, also called firelight. This is a fungus problem and you can do a lot now to prevent it from recurring next year.

Cut the stalks back to the ground and burn them. Drench the peony bed with a solution of bordeaux mixture, or captan, or both. Also, in spring, keep the new growth covered with one of the above chemicals and make sure the young buds are well covered.

White peonies are rugged in winter, they do need dividing and transplanting every few years, especially if they do not blossom.

Non-blooming is not always due to overwatering, however. If the buds come out in spring, but turn brown, the reason is firelight, a fungus we just mentioned.

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FLOWERING MAPLE: What causes the buds to drop off the flowering maple, one of our best house plants? Flowering maple (it's not a maple at all, but has maple leaves) is referred to as "moon chimes" and was one of grandmother's favorite house plants. You'll find it listed as Abutilon ("U-BOO-llii-on") and it likes sunshine, plus a uniformly moistened soil.

This item rapidly becomes potbound and needs a lot of

water. Drooping of buds and blossoms can be due to "rot" of the buds. If the soil is dry and dry air. It often sets more buds than it can support. Plants are apt to get spindly and tall, so pinch the tips of shoots occasionally to induce bushiness.

Parlor maple (another name for it) grows fast and needs shifting to a larger pot. Plant blossoms on new end growth, so you can encourage blossoming by feeding it a liquid plant food (such as 20-10-10) once every four weeks. Start new plants from seeds sown anytime or you can take tip cuttings and root them in sand or plain tapwater.

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GREEN THUMB CLINIC: A reader writes: "Please tell us what causes brown spots in our lawn."

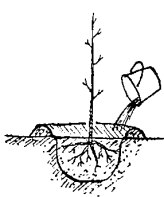
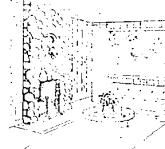
Handy Jim's FIX-UP TIPS

This Room Has 'Character'

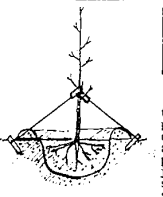
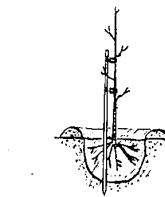
To GIVE a room character and distinction, just pick a theme and decorate accordingly. It can be Western Ranch, Days of '30, Southern Plantation, New Orleans.

If, if you wish, give it personality by footstool, teddy bear, or some other family hero.

The theme approach encourages family participation in planning, buying, installing and furnishing. It turns the work into a single field, simplifying the problem and assuring a distinctive atmosphere with little danger of design errors.



FINAL STEPS in planting a tree or shrub are the soaking and staking or guying to ensure a vertical position.



Suburban Gardener

Step-By-Step Method For Planting Shrubs

By BETTY FRANKEL

The season for planting leafy trees and shrubs has arrived. They are dormant now and in a condition to be moved with relatively little shock to the plants. If they are moved in the fall they will get a head start because even though there is no top growth at this season, the roots continue to grow until the ground is solidly frozen.

Large trees are best moved with a ball of earth around the roots, but smaller trees and most shrubs can be moved with the roots bare. They are lighter and easier to handle when they are bare-rooted. Several precautions must be observed in order to successfully transplant them this way.

1. Keep the roots from drying out before the tree is planted. Cover the roots with damp straw or a piece of cloth or plastic.
2. Prune damaged or broken roots, and also prune the branches to compensate for the lost roots.
3. Soak roots in a tub of water before planting. Soak overnight, or for at least one hour.
4. Dig the hole about 18 inches deep and six inches to 12 inches wider than the spread of the roots.
5. Prepare a soil planting mixture. Use one part peat or humus to two parts of soil removed from the planting hole. Mix until well blended.
6. Fill in a loose layer of soil mixture about six inches deep in the bottom of the planting hole.
7. Place the tree or shrub in the hole and turn it until it is positioned so that it looks most attractive from the main point of view.
8. Spread roots out so they are not twisted, crossed or bunched up.
9. Raise or lower the tree or shrub in the hole so it will be at the same depth at which it had been growing in the nursery.
10. Fill prepared soil mixture around roots working it down between the roots. (Fingers are best for this.)
11. When the hole is half filled straighten the tree so it is vertical and tramp the soil down gently but firmly, holding the tree upright.
12. Fill in soil mixture to proper depth and press down firmly to remove air pockets.
13. Mound surplus soil at outer edge of planting hole to form a saucer or basin around

the tree or shrub.

14. Water thoroughly. Fill the soil saucer with water and let it seep down. Then fill with water again.

15. Stake trees so the prevailing winds will not cause them to lean. Use a sturdy stake about 1 1/2 to two inches thick and about three quarters driven into the ground three or four feet from the base of the tree.

An alternate procedure, especially for large trees, is to use three guy wires stretching from the trunk where the lower limbs branch out to short stakes driven into the ground three or four feet from the base of the tree.

16. Wrap the trunk with a strip of burlap or special heavy crepe paper. Arrange it in overlapping spirals. Wrapping will help prevent water loss through the trunk and also prevent sun scald.

17. Soak every week until the ground freezes, and give the plant a weekly soaking next spring and summer. Fill the soil saucer with water and let it soak in.

18. Do not give the tree or shrub any fertilizer this fall. Next spring after new growth is

FIX-IT TIP

Don't throw away screw-top jars. Instant coffee and peanut butter jars especially make wonderful storage containers for leftover paints. Be sure to fill the jars to the brim. Then screw the lid on tightly. By sealing out the air, you can keep your paint fresh until you're ready to use it again. The clear glass jars enable you to see exactly what color the paint is.

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