

Suburban Gardener

How Ruth Normali's Gift Azaleas Grow

By BETTY FRANKEL
Special Writer

Mrs. Albert Normali has had great success with the tiny azalea she received as a gift last Easter. The plant, now many times larger, is laden with frilly rose-edged white flowers.

Last June the small plant

was put outdoors in a semi-shady spot beneath some shrubs and trees. Ruth Normali admits it got very little care and attention during the summer, but fortunately it was in a moist area and didn't dry out.

The plant was brought back indoors in September before there was danger of frost. Just before it was moved inside,

the plant was sprayed with a special azalea spray to control spider mites.

AT THE TIME it was brought in, it was moved to a larger pot. Mrs. Normali uses clay pots because they have good drainage, but for display wraps the pot in colorful paper or foil. The soil used was a blend of purchased potting soil, peat humus, and vermiculite.

The plant was placed in an east window in a cool bedroom until it was covered with buds. Then it was brought into the family room and placed in a south window where it got maximum sunshine. A nearby heating duct has been kept closed so no dry hot air blows directly on the plant, and the temperature is still kept fairly cool.

Now that the plant is in bloom, Mrs. Normali waters it every day, but before that, watering every few days was sufficient. Azaleas prefer moist soil, but with good drainage.

THE PLANT was fed while the buds were forming. Every two weeks it got an application of a solution of a special azalea fertilizer dissolved in water.

Feeding was stopped when the plant came into bloom. A special azalea fertilizer is recommended because it is formulated to supply the necessary acidity to the soil that azaleas also require.

Once a week Ruth Normali puts her azalea plant in the wash tub and gives the leaves a thorough shower bath. This spraying is done even when the plant is in bloom. It freshens the plant and also removes any accumulated dust.

Gift azaleas, such as Ruth Normali's, can be enjoyed for many years. Although they may not bloom as heavily as when forced in a greenhouse, the home grower can have plants that grow larger and lovelier year after year.



MRS. ALBERT NORMALI keeps azaleas growing indoors. (Evert photo)

Need Own Hideaway

In this fast-moving age, a couple with children needs a retreat which will give them privacy, quiet and relaxation. That retreat could well be their bedroom.

This can be planned into a new home or tailored into an existing one. It could be on the ground floor, with access to a patio, or on the second story.

In either case, it needs to be an "adults only" territory emphasizing privacy and relaxation, a place parents can have as their own.

IN PLANNING this room, the couple should figure on "his" and "her" areas so that

together won't be overdone. For instance, they could have a study area, a reading place, game table for use together or separately.

Television and stereo should be separate to avoid conflicts. They should be located so one can listen while the other sleeps or reads.

To establish the masculine and feminine tone of the "his" and "her" areas, textured walls, such as a tapestry pattern for the woman and leather textured for the man.

The texture actually feels like real cowhide.

The Handyman

Q. A plastic bread-wrap melted against the side of our electric toaster, and I can't seem to get it off. Is there anything I can use to remove the melted plastic?

A. The plastic most commonly used for wrapping today is polyethylene sheet. This material melts at just above the boiling point of water. Unfortunately, the manufacturers tell us that there is no practical solvent for polyethylene. If you can catch it quickly, you may be able to scrape

it off while it is still melted, but after it has been reheated several times it hardens permanently, and is almost impossible to remove.

Q. How can I remove mortar from old brick that I want to re-use?

A. Scrape and chip off as much mortar as you can, then soak the bricks in a solution of water and sugar.



BONSAI TRICKS. Recently someone asked us for information on growing Bonsai in cement. We were puzzled and asked for help and got plenty. In case you don't know, bonsai is the art of growing big trees small, and I know very little about it. If you can't grow plants in your garden, stay away from bonsai!

Here are some tips sent me for those who want to dwarf a tree by growing it in cement (yes, cement!)

To make a cement base, use 2 1/2 cups of fresh dry cement, 2 1/2 cups sharp sand and one cup each of charcoal, sawdust, peatmoss, perlite and powdered limestone. Other material needed: a 10 inch saucer, 1 1/2 inches deep, plus two 2 1/2 inch dowels, 10 inches long—one thrust through the center of a medium-size raw potato.

You mix the dry ingredients in a clean container, add water until mix is doughy. Place sheet of plastic on a flat surface, lay other wooden dowel on it, and mold the wet mix (so it's eight inches wide, six inches tall) over the dowel.

Next job is to form a planting pocket in the cement and you do this by pushing the potato into the mound. Let mound cure for 10 days, then pull out the dowels and scoop out the spot with a spoon.

Holes made by the dowels will allow water to drain (get it?). For planting, use soil mix of one-third sand, peat and loam, one-half leafmold and half sand. Moisten the soil before putting it in the hole where the potato was.

Hardened rock is put into the saucer, insert the plant you want to make into a dwarf. Always use plants which have naturally small leaves such as azalea, Japanese Red Maples, evergreens, and it's a good idea to use trees native to your area, if possible.

One bonsai grower has many dwarf evergreens—some nearly 50 years old, and none more than a foot tall. The secret? Limited food and root-growing space. Materials in the rock are broken down slowly by excretion from the roots and are used as the nutrients on which the roots feed. The concrete method is a good way to produce dwarf trees because it needs no re-potting, no root pruning and other chores once you build the rock base.

COLEUS HOUSE PLANTS. Those of you who took "slips" from your coleus to start new plants probably are wondering why the leaves drop.

Coleus will often do this in midwinter, especially if grown in water instead of soil. Old plants shed their leaves more readily than young ones.

If you grow them in a soil containing lots of boron, shedding of leaves is lessened. You can cut the tops off and root them in plain tap water, then pot these up in a good mix. They don't like or need direct sun. Grow them in a bright window, and you'll find these plants produce a minimum of dry, brown leaves.

Garden Thoughts For A Winter Day

A pencil and a seed catalog are the gardener's best friends during winter.

They furnish a way to pass the time and help to turn dreams into realities.

Add a pad of cross-section paper to pencil and catalog and you add another dimension—the plan for later planting.

Anyone can count squares—you don't need to be either an artist or a landscape architect. And approximate footages of the areas you intend to plant can be stepped off at any time of year.

AN INTERESTING and unusual house plant that can be grown from seeds is the Jacaranda tree—a 50-foot native of Brazil.

Fern-like leaves and blue flowers make this one of the world's outstanding trees.

Of course no tree will grow in your window but seeds planted in the garden will furnish dainty foliage all summer and a plant or two potted to bring indoors will be a conversation piece all winter.

IF YOU LIVE in an area where salt is used in paths to melt ice, beware of the after-effects on nearby lawns or plants.

If you must use salt, flush the nearby plants with a copious supply of water just as soon as weather permits—certainly in early spring.

Then fertilize as early as possible to give injured plants a chance to survive.

AND IF YOU LIVE where it's warmer, plant seeds of quick-flowering annuals like poppies and bachelor buttons or cool-weather annuals like larkspur and sweet peas unless, of course, you sowed their seeds earlier.

AS A MATTER of fact, poppy and bachelor button seeds can be planted even in the North, even on top of snow.

They may not come up in a perfectly straight row, but sprout they will when the soil and air warm.

PERHAPS you thought that morning glories were the only flower that opened early and closed late? Not so.

Bartonia, more commonly called Blazing Star, opens at night and stays that way until noon of the next day.

And of course, you know that four o'clocks get their name from their habit of opening at four in the afternoon.

HAVE YOU EVER tried growing mushrooms during winter? It's a rewarding experience.

You need a place where the temperature stays between 50 and 60 degrees.

You buy the mushroom spawn and plant it in soil, water well and keep covered until the first show.

YOUR HOME COMES FIRST



SAVE \$ \$ \$ AT...



PANEL SPECIALS OF THE WEEK

NEW! PRE-FINISHED MAHOGANY SPANISH ELM

PANELING \$3.24 4'x7'

4'x8' ... \$3.89 NEW DARK AVOCADO SHADE

VANITIES

Large Selection

Choice of wood grain, choice of tops. Sizes available: 24", 36", 40", 42", and 48".

Sink Included

Many sizes from which to choose. Doubles and Singles.

COLORED SINKS NOW AVAILABLE

Faucet Assemblies Available

Price from \$59.97

PRE-FINISHED MAHOGANY PANELING

\$2.99 4'x7'

4'x8' ... \$3.64

FIRST QUALITY • DARK WALNUT • CHESTNUT • C & C

VINYL PANELING

★ ON MAHOGANY ★

NOW \$4.97 NOW \$5.97

- Cajon Pecan • Winter Elm
- English Chestnut
- Coventry Birch
- Kiln Fired Walnut
- Delacroix Walnut

Plus 3 New Shades

Golden Walnut • Womby Chestnut • Smokey Valley Pecan

BEAUTIFY YOUR BATHROOM THE EASY WAY

DRYWALL

4'x8' \$1.66

4'x8'x1/2" ... \$1.90

St. Hardboard 4'x8'x1/4" \$1.66 C & C

2 x 4 x 7

Kiln Dried White Wood ECONOMY

\$39.95 ea.

(Fresh Stock - No Limit) C & C

DECORATIVE PANELS

The perfect answer for bath, rooms, and shower stalls, kitchen and utility areas.

- Completely washable
- Moisture, grease, dirt resistant
- Durable - long life and beauty
- Apply to new or old walls
- Adhesive and moldings available

4' x 8' Sheets Reg. \$9.88 \$8.88 C & C

MEDICINE CABINET

All white enameled cabinet, chrome edged. Copper backed plate glass mirror. Glass shelves. Size 16x22. Special at \$7.95

"TOPS FOR BOTTOMS"

Plain or marbled. Many colors and styles.

From \$2.99

EVERY-DAY SAVINGS ON DO-IT-YOURSELF ITEMS

BLACK & DECKER DRILLS

#7000 - 1/4" \$8.88

#7100 - 3/8" \$9.88

Largest Selection in Town

PLANTER SPINDLES BALUSTER POLES

79¢ and up

FLECTO X-3D Wood Stain

- Fills, stains, seals all in one application
- Complete color control no lap or brush marks
- Will not raise the grain
- Easy to apply
- Fast drying

Clear California Redwood Shelves Size 18x24, priced from 88¢

Sizes to 72" Available

PINE LUMBER CO., DIV.

WEST SIDE YARD:

12222 Inkster Road

Charge it on Michigan Bankcard, Master Charge or Bank Americard

Open Mon., Tues., Wed. 9-6; Thur., Fri. 9-8; Saturday 8-5; Sunday 10-4

KE 2-9037