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The Green Thumb

By GEORGE ABRAHAM

BLUE SPRUCE turn brown? If your spruce has these brown, pineapple-shaped structures on the ends of the limbs, it's a sign of spruce gall aphids. This insect stings the tissue and causes the spunk-like galls, which are more unsightly than harmful. However, they will weaken a tree if present in numbers. Control: Cut off as many as you can and burn. Also spray with malathion in late May and early June, and again in September and October.

Many wonder how to make a blue spruce a deeper blue. Some nurserymen claim this trick is possible by adding iron sulfate to the soil. Add a handful of the material to each tree, scattering it underneath and watering it in with a garden hose.

Some spruce are bluer than others. If you start them from seed, you get a lot of variation in color. September is a good time to pick the cones if you want to try your hand at starting from seed. Get them before the scales separate and allow the seed to escape. Put the seed in glass jars (not sealed) until spring when the seed can be sown. Use a half- and half soil mixture of sand and peat moss. Never let the seed dry out once it has started to germinate!

FREE: Want to know more about growing the blue spruce? Send me a self-addressed, stamped envelope and ask for a copy of my bulletin, "How to Grow the Blue Spruce." My guide tells how to start plants from seed and cuttings, and has tips on growing them.

WHY TOMATOES COLOR POORLY? If your tomatoes have ripened unevenly, blame it on temperature. Temperatures of 75 degrees or below are ideal for ripening tomatoes on the vine. High daily temperatures soften the fruit and retard the red color. You can pick fruits in the pink stage of maturity and ripen them in the home at temperatures of 60 to 70 degrees. The lower temperatures favor firmer flesh.

Floor cover development and smuscle are also due to high temperatures. Cracking of the fruit can be prevented by keeping the soil watered regularly, or by using crack-resistant types such as Glamour. When fruit is enlarging, cracking may be increased if moisture content varies too much from day to day.

GREEN THUMB CLINIC: A reader writes: "We have an African Violet with many small plant clusters in it. Can it be divided even while in bloom?"

Answer: Yes. Take a sharp knife or razor and cut each cluster away so that each has a portion of the root system. Each division can be potted in the right soil mixture. Don't worry if a division wilts. They'll perk up when the new roots develop. You can protect them from severe wilting by covering with a plastic sheet or setting in a glass jar.

Sweet William Is Sown In Early Fall

Sweet William is an odd name for a flower because flowers are much more apt to be given common names of girls. However, the name was not always that 'it is today.

"William" comes from the French word, "oulet," meaning "a little eye." This was corrupted to "willie" and from that, in the course of time, to "William." The adjective sweet, of course, refers to the delightful scent of the flowers.

If you will look carefully at a sweet William flower, you will see that it has had a center "little eye" of a different color than the rest of the bloom. And, if you smell it, you'll agree that the fragrance is sweet.

Although gardeners usually treat sweet William as if it were a biennial, it is truly a perennial. It also seeds itself freely. Thus, if seeds are sown in a place where the plants can grow undisturbed, the blossoms will appear there year after year with no assistance from the gardener other than a bit of weeding now and then.

To start sweet William in your garden, seeds may be sown in early fall. Flowers from these will bloom in June of the following year. Seeds also may be sown in very early spring, just as soon as the soil is workable. Plants from spring-sown seeds will start blooming a bit later than from those sown in fall.

Because the plants grown from seeds always are sturdier than plants bought full-grown, it is sensible to start with seeds.

After soil is prepared by spading and then raking to smooth and refine it, seeds may be broadcast over the surface or planted in rows, as you prefer. Cover the seed lightly. That's all that is necessary.

The flowers that appear will be single or double, according to the variety you bought. Red Monarch is a new and handsome some scarlet red. There also are such named varieties as Newport Pink, a delightful warm tarmelon pink, Crimson Beauty, Copper Red, Scarlet Beauty and Pure White—their colors told by their names.

You can even sow seeds at a tiny, dwarf, sweet William, only 4 inches high, named Wee Willie, with blooms of many colors.

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Consider Climate When Placing Yard Additions

EAST LANSING—Putting a house, fence, garden or tree in the right place doesn't cost any more than putting them in the wrong place.

But few people consider climatic conditions in deciding which is the right place.

Associate director of Michigan State University's School of Urban Planning and Landscape Architecture, Prof. Newton Gilcick made a study of some climatic conditions of this area which should interest prospective homeowners:

"WIDE ROOF overhangs on the south side of a house can control the sun's rays. Rooms receive heat and sunlight in winter and are cool and shaded in summer," he said.

He pointed out that even on overcast days a good deal of heat comes through when the sun's rays strike glass.

"Trees which drop their leaves in winter work like venetian blinds, screening out the sun in summer and letting it through in winter," he said.

"Vertical sun angles vary with the time of the year. The summer sun is high and shadows are short; windows on the south side of a house can be in complete shade if a sufficient roof overhang is provided," he said.

He noted that the most comfortable areas for outdoor living in July and August in this part of the state are on the north side.

During the rest of the year the south side is most pleasant, he said.

Windows on the south side receive full sunshine even during winter when the north side of the house is cold and dark because of the sun's low position and the long northerly shadows.

GILCICK ALSO collected statistics of interest to homeowners: "Rather uniform precipitation occurs throughout Michigan during the year. Annual total rainfall is 31 inches, January and February have less than two inches; May and June have more than five inches; the others have between two and three inches," he said.

Humidity is high in winter and moderate in summer but is not a major problem, according to Gilcick, because of good air circulation.

He noted that wind directions in central Michigan are generally from the west but vary with the time of year.

He pointed out that wind velocities and directions are important in planning for comfortable living.

France can also cause problems to homeowners. In spring the last freezing temperature is expected around May 7; in the fall for the first freezing temperature occurs, around Oct. 5, Gilcick said.

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