

The Green Thumb

By GEORGE ABRAHAM

FRAGRANT AFRICAN VIOLETS: From time to time readers ask me if there is such a thing as a fragrant African violet. There is none today that I know of and apparently there is no possibility of breeding violets for fragrance. It's too bad this item does not have a sweet scent since it often blooms the whole year round.

Some growers have good luck producing leaves with red undersides. This comes about when light is good and strong, and also when the temperature is lower than 72 degs. Some varieties seem to grow foliage with red undersides, more so than others.

Double violets seem to last longer (blooming) than the singles, and they do not drop blossoms as do the single types. Keep in mind they need more food and water than do the singles. Variegated plants are not as husky as the plain green

ones, although with proper care they will give you a good show. Sometimes violets given by friends act different in a new home. The leaves may be larger and blooms larger or darker. These changes are due to environment. Often plants of the same variety grow in different homes will change due to differences in humidity, soil, plant food, light and water, and general care.

FREE: Send me self-addressed, stamped envelope for a copy of my bulletin, How To Grow Poinsettias, Gardenias and Camellias. My guide is full of good tips for any one who likes house plants.

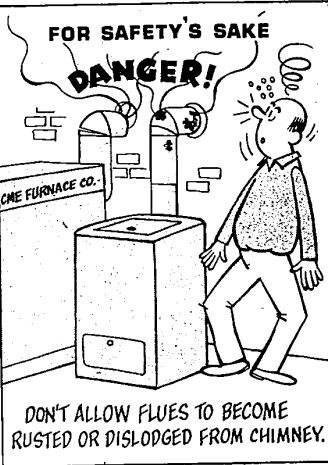
GREEN TOMATOES AGAIN: Many write to tell me that they still have hanging tomatoes, vines and all, in the garage is the best way to keep the green fruit. The green to-

matoes will gradually turn red, and light is not necessary for ripening them when you bring the fruit inside.

You can also pick green tomatoes and keep them in a dark cool place. Place them in a wire tray in a cool cellar. Lay a piece of newspaper over the tray before putting the green fruit on.

GREEN THUMB CLINIC: "our roses are in full bloom now. We want to keep them over winter, but hate to do anything until the blooms go. What is the best way?"

Answer: Some feel that most winter roses kill in fall, rather than in midwinter. We till ours with soil, starting in late October regardless of whether there is flowers on or not. Nothing beats billing roses with soil around the base. Straw, evergreen boughs, etc. are useful, but are not as effective.



Peek-Proof
When a solid courtyard wall or fence is needed, but 12x4-inch cedar boards against 1/2x2 set edge out for a good, three-dimensional pattern that also offers strong shadow lines.

Self-Defense
A good-neighbor fence looks equally attractive on both sides.

Shade Improves Lawn

Mature trees and the shade they afford at a home site are certainly worth more than the occasional problems they present.

Fortunately, something can be done about the problem of maintaining ground cover despite diminished light and the drain on soil moisture by tree roots, the Lawn Institute says.

PROPERLY blended lawnseed, combined with stepped-up feeding and high mowing, generally allows the luxury of both tree and turf, it adds.

For much of the country shade ed to keep grass green if dry weather persists.

ONE OF the chief causes for grass loss in the shade is the greater severity of disease there, the Institute explains.

While it is almost impossible to prevent disease, the better lawngresses usually recover adequately.

Michigan State University tests show that over a period of years the fine fescues received best, and gradually came to dominate the lawn under the trees.

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Tropical Bean Grows Longer In America

Hyacinth beans are natives of the tropics where they are perennials, living from year to year.

In climates that are more rigorous, the plants become annuals—that is, the bloom from seeds sown when soil warms, but die when frost arrives.

Even in this change in their habits, hyacinth beans will climb 10 feet in a single season.

The leaves are large and three-parted. Flowers usually are reddish-purple but there is a white-flowered variety, rarely seen. The blooms are borne in stiff spikes and are shaped like those of sweet peas, but much smaller.

They are followed by edible beans, best picked to eat when they are young and tender. These beans are widely sold on markets in many tropical countries, but most American gardeners have never tasted them.

Because hyacinth bean is such a fast grower, and because the foliage is large, because the bean is not particular as to soil and looks well, it is a good choice for a screen.

While a trellis is best provided for the vine to climb, a temporary screen may be made by using stout cord, installed from ground to some support above.

This may be placed wherever a quick screen is needed.



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If Soffits Dreary, Nail Up Battens

Have you ever thought of decorating the soffit under the roof eaves? It may not be an area of vital design concern, but if you're annoyed by its unimaginative appearance, a dress-up can be accomplished in rapid order.

Just nail 1 1/2-inch fir battens directly to the soffit's underside, running them from house wall to fascia and spacing them apart to get whatever effect pleases you. Finish the battens with stain for minimum upkeep.

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