

Holidays are special photo times



FOCUS ON PHOTOGRAPHY
I like to write annually on probably the best time of the year for recording treasured family memories with your camera — the holidays.

So here goes with this year's advice and recommendations.

Christmas and children go hand in hand so let's begin with them. Remember to move in close to their level. Concentrate on candids as the youngsters unwrap their presents under the tree and begin to play with their new toys. Your photos will appear natural because in all the excitement the children won't even know you're there.

But don't forget other family members. For group shots, have everyone sit or stand around informally rather than stiffly posed. Even try some candids as you did with the children. Try including yourself in the picture by using the self-timer and placing the camera on a tripod or steady table.

As always, check your background for unwanted or distracting objects. And watch out for undesirable reflections from windows, mirrors or picture glass that may ruin a treasured shot. Most often, a slight adjustment in camera angle eliminates this problem.

Keep alert for other Christmas subjects that will add variety and interest to your holiday pictures. A色fully filled stocking, a beautifully wrapped present, or a sparkling tree ornament will all reward you with a fine yuletide shot.

Take advantage of today's fast films. Using 1000 or 1600 speed films, try lighting some scenes only with candlelight. Your dinner table or family member lit only by candles will produce that unforgettable romantic shot. An exposure of f-2 at 1/30 second is all that's needed.

Need a last-minute stocking stuffer? How about one of the Fujifilm or Kodak disposable panorama cameras? They're inexpensive and produce surprisingly good results. A supply of film, a new camera bag or a beautiful photo-filled 1995 calendar will please any photographer.

Here's another unusual gift idea, "Borrow." Dad's old home movies — you know, the ones collecting dust on the top shelf — and have them video transferred. Imagine his and everyone's delight when you pop them into the VCR for a memorable holiday treat.

And at holiday time, we're usually ankle deep in nature's blanket of winter snow. So bundle up both you and your camera to capture some exciting winter scenes on film.



Winter wonder: The holidays offer the perfect time to head outdoors to capture dramatic winter scenes on film. This is Old Mill Falls near Ithaca, N.Y.

Happy holidays to all my readers and friends.

Monte Nagler is a fine art photographer based in Farmington Hills.

Good planning aids garden success

BY MARGE ALPERN
SPECIAL WRITER

I enjoy looking back and re-seeing my summer garden. Much of the success in achieving continuous bloom is due to the use of carefully selected annuals, some new and some very old, but all carefully chosen to achieve this goal.

Annuals are plants that complete their life cycle in one season. If started from seeds or seedlings, they will die with the first killing frost. Frequent fertilizing with a bloom-promoting formula plus regular deadheading are all that most annuals need if their sun requirements are observed.

Great achievers

Topping the list of the great achievers in my garden is the award-winning cosmos named "Sonata White."

Much more compact in growing habit than the tall and often straggly older varieties, "Sonata White" when grown in full sun produces many large, white, yellow-centered flowers all summer long. When used in a bouquet, they lend a soft, loose, graceful effect and last very well indoors.

Equally deserving of recognition, I believe, is a coral-colored fuchsia that gave a whole new look to my shade garden. "Garnet-leaf" fuchsia grows about 18 to 20 inches tall on slightly woody stems.

The slender, elongated bell-like flowers, typical of fuchsia, hang

in that it doesn't come back the following year from the basal growth, this verbena will reseed itself, according to the growers at Bording's, where I bought the plants last spring.

Reseeding
I'm not sure that reseeding is such a desirable quality in annuals. It can create a serious problem. Three years after growing the tall and beautiful cleome, I am still discovering unwanted seedlings.

Such plants as cleome should carry a warning sign reading, "Reseeds endlessly and vigorously over a period of two to three years and over a space of one entire garden."

Not all annuals that reseed create extra work.

The lowly sweet alyssum is rarely hailed by gardeners or garden writers. But this tiny border plant, which produces masses of fragrant blooms all summer long until frost with just one drastic deadheading, also reseeds.

The reseeding, however, is conducted in a very mannerly way, and the new seedlings come up each year in exactly the same place as the original planting.

The only flowers I regularly grow from seed in the old-fashioned, airy, fragrant nasturtium, one of my favorites for indoor arrangements.

Each seed produces an abundance of lush green foliage and funnel-shaped flowers in every

shade from cream through yellow to orange and red. Nasturtiums flaunt their brightness in the sun in the garden right up until a killing frost.

I must conclude this high praise by saying that nasturtiums aren't exactly neat plants, and even the so-called "non-vining" varieties tend to get a little messy. It may not be for everyone.

Wonderful

Another plant that I will praise wasn't even grown in my garden. A good friend, Margie Shell, grew a plant called "Blue Wonder," a Scavoia, in two large pots on a sunny terrace. The plants had been bought in the spring from English Gardens.

I visited Margie's garden in May, July and September and each time the dazzling blue plants were covered with blooms and were low and compact. I'm sure frequent deadheading helped and the result was dramatic.

Next summer I'm going to plant my big pots with not just the usual nasturtiums but with "Blue Wonder" as well. I'm already dreaming of spring gardening even though I just finished pulling up the dead impatiens.

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Marge Alpern is a Birmingham-based freelance writer and avid gardener.

Fine arts competition set

The Birmingham Bloomfield Art Association is now accepting the prospectus for its 14th annual Michigan Fine Arts Competition, a statewide, all-media competition for artists who are age 18 and older and living or working in Michigan.

Friday, Jan. 20, is the deadline for slide entries in the MFAC. Artists interested in submitting work should contact the BBAA for a call for entries by calling (810) 644-0868 or writing 1516 S.

Cranbrook Road, Birmingham 48009.

The 1995 MFAC will feature internationally acclaimed artist James Del Grosso as juror. Del Grosso, a realist painter who is celebrated for his still life paintings, maintains a studio in East Hampton, N.Y.

He will visit Michigan in April to determine the awards for works he selected for inclusion in the show and to present a lecture about his own career.

The top award of \$1,000 is being presented by the Arts Foundation of Michigan, which has provided the top prize support for the MFAC throughout its 14-year history.

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