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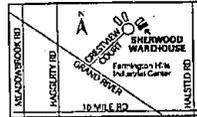
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Flowers from page C1

37700 W. Six Mile in Livonia. Orchids are the largest plant family with 35,000 species and more than 60,000 hybrids. They're extremely diverse. Some can bloom in a tencup, others need larger containers and form vines several feet long.

Some grow tiny flowers that require a microscope for viewing and others are as large as a plate. Some are suitable for prom corsages and others resemble butterflies. Some last days while others last months.

Orchid growing was once a hobby for the wealthy, but modern propagation methods have made the flowers affordable. From the tropics to the subarctic, they grow in trees, on rocks and even under the ground.

Violet from page C1

penetration. Repeat at least twice a year by removing one-third of the old soil and replacing with new soil. ■ Grooming Remove up to three leaves per month from the bottom row. Carefully bend the leaves to the side while gently

pulling. The leaf stem will break away clean. This keeps all the leaves new and fresh and promotes a burst of new growth from the crown. Keep old blossoms picked off and remove the old bloom stalk completely when all blooms are finished.

If you find a white dust on the plants, they might have mildew. Use a fungicide spray such as Captan. Measure 1 teaspoon to 1 gallon of water, and spray the affected plants. Provide more air movement to avoid any future mildew problems.

Garden from page C1

to start looking for seeds so you'll have them when it's time to plant them. Take some time to read the package directions so your plants will grow beautifully. They have completely different horticultural requirements.

■ Another candidate for the tall garden is Elephant's Ear, Colocasia, a tender bulb that likes high temperatures and humidity.

made from the root. Plant the tubers 4 inches deep, 48 inches apart. The plant takes several months to reach maturity. It likes to be constantly covered by 3 to 5 inches of water. No fertilizer is required unless the soil is very poor; then a good dressing with a balanced organic fertilizer should be worked into the soil at planting time.

Castor Bean

Castor Bean (*Ricinus communis*) has large, shiny leaves with five to 11 toothed lobes and often measures more than 1 foot across.

There is one species in the genus. The common one has burgundy foliage and is easy to find in garden shops. Other varieties have leaf colors of yellow, red and gray; some have contrasting veins and deeply cleft leaves. Those plants will draw lots of attention to your garden. For a real "wow," grow several different cultivars. The Castor Bean or Castor-oil plant is a native of tropical Africa and was introduced to English horticulture in 1548. It wasn't grown much until glass houses were built and the seeds could be planted early in the houses.

Marty Figley

The seeds contain castor oil, regularly used as a laxative some years ago. The oil was used for lubricating machinery and in the production of linoleum, paint, soap and ink. The plant is easy to grow: Just press the spiny, red seed an inch into the soil and watch it grow. It needs lots of sunshine and water.

Inconspicuous flowers are followed by the seedpods; the skin of the beans contains the deadly toxin ricin. Don't let your children play with them; remove the flower panicles before they bear fruit.

Elephant's Ear

Another candidate for the tall garden is Elephant's Ear, *Colocasia*, a tender bulb that likes high temperatures and humidity. There are six or seven species, one of which, *C. esculenta*, produces edible tubers. Poi is

At the end of the season, lift the tuber and keep it barely moist and warm during the colder months. Replant when day temperatures are 65 to 70 degrees and night temperatures are in the 55-degree range.

The heart-shaped leaves are often shades of green, sometimes interlarded with a deep brownish-purple color between the lateral veins. It would be outstanding and a show stopper in the right setting.

A container with a slurry of water would provide the proper moisture; just don't let the container dry out.

GOOD GARDEN TIP

Don't cover smothering spring bulbs — they tolerate subfreezing temperatures just fine. Marty Figley is an advanced master gardener based in Birmingham.

You can leave her a message by dialing (734) 963-2047 on a touch-tone phone. Her fax number is (248) 644-1314.

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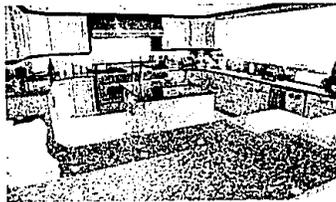
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