



Strong Cleaners Harmful

The best way to handle a cleaning chore is to use the least strong cleaner that will still do the job. Using strong chemicals or abrasives where they are not needed can be a form of "overkill" that does more harm than good.

The Aluminum Association reports that this is particularly true of aluminum products. Aluminum needs only a little cleaning to keep it looking like new.

For instance, if you want to clean the aluminum siding on your house before the cold weather sets in use just water or water with a mild soap added. The long, hollow-handled brush used for car washing is also handy for washing down the sides of houses.

BEFORE putting your aluminum screens away for winter, rub them with a stiff brush while washing them down with a hose and mild detergent. When they are thoroughly dry, they can be painted with thin screen varnish or clear lacquer.

When your camper is ready for its winter's rest, its painted aluminum parts can be cleaned with water and a mild cleaner, and rubbed down with a soft sponge.

And when your aluminum boat has finished its season, it really won't need any maintenance, but if you want to paint it for appearance sake, follow the paint manufacturer's directions.

These and other hints are covered in a new booklet "Care of Aluminum" available for 25 cents a copy in coin from the Aluminum Association, Dept. A, 750 Third Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017.

Screen Hides Cooling Unit

Air conditioning is a boon in hot weather, but bulky exterior condenser or compressor units add an alien shape to a home's landscaping.

A screen or fence of western wood, blending with the house design, will camouflage the unit, baffle its noise, and can be combined with plantings to beautify the yard.

The screen must be designed to allow room around the unit for air circulation and access for servicing. Plants should be kept at least a foot away from the unit.



The Green Thumb

By GEORGE ABRAHAM

Citrus plants indoors: Home gardeners who raise citrus plants (oranges, lemons, limes, grapefruit, etc.) often are dismayed to find their plants do not flower. This can be due to a lack of summer ripening period, high room temperatures, or a lack of light. Keep your plants outdoors in warm weather and syringe the foliage from time to time to keep out aphids, red spider mites and other pests.

The so-called Ponderosa lemon is a house plant that produces big edible fruit, some weighing over one-half pound apiece. The calamondin or miniature orange has fragrant white flowers, edible fruits one to 1½ inches in diameter. All citrus prefer a loose, well-drained soil, loam, sand and peat mixed together.

You can start new plants from seeds or cuttings. Take four-inch cuttings from tips and root them in sand or perlite. Or you can sow seed in four-inch pots of soil any time of year. Plants grown from seed produce nice foliage and blooms but cannot be depended upon for edible fruit.

PRUNING evergreens: Why should the subject of pruning evergreens be such a mystery to home gardeners? In the first place, there are too many man-made rules which hog down the home gardener. He'd rather plant the bushes and forget them, than to take a chance on pruning.

Evergreens represent a rather big investment and you should plan on spending a few minutes trimming and caring for your evergreens.

Here are a few tips on care: The Filzer juniper is one of our common spreading types, and is a vigorous grower. It'll soon become too wide for space allotted unless it is properly pruned. The spreading type can be "plucked," that is, you don't shear it into a ball. Rather you take a pair of clippers and reach in here and there, snipping out a branch from a bird's-eye view, the bush has a star shape, more of less. Upright types of junipers can be sheared as they lend themselves nicely to it.

Mugho pines need frequent pruning if it is to be kept compact. Prune when the candles ("candle-like" shoots) are fully grown and soft. This new growth should be shortened about 2-3 of the way back to the old growth. Use a sharp pair of pruning shears or knife.

Firs and spruce need little pruning. If the trees tend to become too open they can be made to develop more foliage and thicker tops by pruning.

Items such as hemlocks can be sheared or you can pluck out a few branches here and there. Cut without any consideration to the location of buds, as new growth will fill in.

Japanese Yews (Taxus) can be sheared into formal effect, or you can snip off a few long shoots here and there for an informal effect. These can be trimmed repeatedly to make them nice and bushy.

Arborvitae are easy to trim and shear. The globe types can be sheared into a ball, using hedge clippers, whereas the pyramidal types can be sheared so as to grow upright.

DON'T BE afraid to trim your evergreens. Old timers will tell you that the best time to trim is when the shears are sharp. You might better pitch right in and trim them, than to let the bushes grow wild, and then attempt to bring them back. Evergreens do not fill in, as do non-evergreens, so don't let your plants grow up into a jungle.

Mulch and feed your evergreens to build up their vigor. They'll show off your home a lot better if you give them a little care.

GREEN THUMB CLINIC: "If our maple tree bleeds where a branch was cut, is this harmful? Does it need a tree paint?"

Answer: No harm is being done. No need to put tree paint on the wound.

Mulch Encourages New Lawn Growth

Mulching a newly seeded lawn will keep it moist, reduce soil erosion and help the lawn get a head start over weeds, according to Dr. James Beard, Michigan State University turfgrass researcher.

Straw is the most commonly used mulch, he says, and should be spread over the newly seeded area at the rate of 60 to 80 pounds per 1,000 square feet. The straw should be free of weed seeds, dead grass, quackgrass and no-sedge.

After the straw is in place, it should be stabilized by rolling and watering. About 50 to 65 per cent of the straw mulch should be carefully removed with a rake or fork when the grass is one to 1½ inches high. This will permit greater light penetration and insure rapid, uniform establishment, says Beard.

To hold straw on large areas, an asphalt spray can be used.

Coarse burlap is frequently used on steep slopes where seed washing and soil erosion are severe problems. The burlap bag can be cut open and pegged down at the corners.

The current environmental awareness makes some people fear that lawn fertilization may abet water pollution. Unless fertilizer is wantonly spilled, this is not the case. Those bluegrasses, fescues and bentgrasses in the lawn will absorb the last iota of fertilizer applied at this season, so hungry are they for plant food.

Even were fertilization excessive, the nutrients would fix in the soil with very little chance for runoff. Tests indicate that rainwater generally contains nearly one part per million of nitrogen, sufficient to support algal growth in streams and lakes without any addition from fertilizer.

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