

The Green Thumb
By GEORGE ABRAHAM

STORING PESTICIDES: With the 1971 gardening year just about over, many are wondering what's the best way to store fertilizers and pesticides.

If dry fertilizers are stored in damp places, they're apt to get lumpy and clog in the bag. Actually this does not affect the nutrients, but it makes spreading very difficult. Most granular materials will cake over if exposed to moisture.

Insecticides will keep over, if stored in containers that can be tightly closed in a dry cool place. Those preparations that are kept in loose containers will lose strength. The aerosol sprays keep original quality because the containers have vapor-proof walls.

Note: Do not store weedkillers near pesticides

because there is some danger of contamination.

Meanwhile, for winter reading, you might look into the possibilities of controlling insect pests by making use of their natural enemies. One natural or biological control method consists of using trichogramma, the tiny natural enemy of the apple worm and an efficient parasite on moths and butterflies.

We're hoping that the time will come soon when we can control many of our pests with well-timed releases of parasites.

EVERGREENS: Newly planted evergreens will come through the winter better if the plants have plenty of moisture in the ground, right up to the time the soil freezes. A burlap screen around the

plant helps reduce water loss and winter burn.

If you can't build a screen, spray the plants with an anti-desiccant in November and again in February to reduce water loss (and winter injury).

I think one reason why many newly-set evergreens die is due to the way they are handled. Always carry balled and burlapped plants, or the

container-grown stock, by the roots - never by the tops. Pulling on tops, or carrying by the top can break soil loose from the roots, and this is one reason why evergreens die the first year.

GREEN THUMB CLINIC: A reader writes: "Is it too late to cut back our poinsettia plant and have it bloom for Christmas?"

Answer: No. Cut the plant back and keep it in a dark room at night, and then bring it out in ordinary light in the morning.

Free: Send me a self-addressed, stamped envelope for our bulletin, "How to Grow Poinsettia."

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27⁴⁷

Neutral Doesn't Date

When decorating their homes, many women feel that a neutral color is easier to live with than the latest "in" hue. Besides, neutral doesn't date. This is especially true with long-life purchases such as resilient tile floors, which last a good 20 years.

The Better Floors Council reports that beige and off-white are by far the best-selling colors in vinyl asbestos tile. With these colors the floor acts as a background for other furnishings. Right now decorators are especially fond of splashy area rugs over neutral resilient floors.

A "restful" color on the floors and walls allows more freedom with other furnishings - major pieces and accessories. With a beige flooring, upholstery colors can be wild, yet the rooms will not seem "loud," the effect is warm and inviting. Side chairs, pillows, curtains, paintings can be any color in the rainbow.

One other big advantage to using resilient when you want light colored floors: it is so easy to care for. You aren't constantly worrying about spills or people tracking in dirt and debris. And the tile will not yellow if you use the proper floor finish and apply as directed, in very thin coats.

Evergreen Shedding Is Normal

EAST LANSING

Take a close look at your pine or arborvitae trees this fall and notice brown needles dropping.

Surprised? Don't be alarmed. It's normal for pines, spruces and similar evergreens to drop one year's growth each fall, according to Michigan State University horticulturist, Dr. Harold Davidson.

Natural needle drop occurs to the center of the tree. Younger needles at the ends of the branches will remain green during this period of shedding.

Scotch pines will lose their three-year-old needles, while the red pine drops its four-year needles.

During shedding, the trees look like they are dying. As soon as a hard wind or rain hits them, the old needles fall and the tree will look normal again.

Handy Jim's FIX-UP TIPS

Shelving Inside Desk

IN THE HOME pressed for space, there's one spot usually overlooked - underneath a kitchen desk.

After leaving room for knees,

Install shelves to accommodate stationary supplies and books. By using Peg-Board panels and Peg-Board fixtures, the spacing can be made flexible for changing requirements.

To prevent items from being pushed off the shelves accidentally, it's a good idea to close the desk opening at the back with a piece of Masonite decorative hardboard, which requires only occasional damp-wiping to keep clean.

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