

# The Green Thumb

By GEORGE ABRAHAM

**Bitter cucumbers:** Last year several gardeners asked us: what made their cucumbers bitter. Bitterness in cukes is a complicated thing. Some people are tasters - can taste the bitter factor, others cannot. In humans, tasting is dominant, and in order to taste or detect bitterness in cukes, you must have a certain genetic constitution in your own body and taste buds. The organic chemicals responsible for bitterness are not only in cukes, but also in squash and especially strong in some gourds. Stangely, bitter cukes attract the striped cucumber beetle and the 12 spotted cuke beetle. On the other hand, they are more resistant to red

spider mites than non-bitter cukes. Many old-timers will tell you that the bitterness is in the end you break off of the vine (not the blossom end). If you cut the top off, about 1/2 inch from the end before peeling, and rub the two cut surfaces together, you will "draw" out the bitter factor. Some feel that cukes get bitter if the soil is dry. They like plenty of moisture so they will develop fast. If they grow too slow, they will be bitter, many believe. **FREE:** Would you like to grow some non-bitter cucumbers? Dr. Henry Munger of Cornell University has been working with non-bitter cukes, and he has given us permission to offer seed free to gardeners who want to try

this cucumber. Send me a self-addressed, stamped envelope and ask for your packet of non-bitter cucumber seed. There's still time to sow and get a good crop. **PINE NEEDLE mulch:** Do pine needles make a good mulch? Yes indeed. They do not break down readily because resins and turpentine counteract the work of bacteria and fungi. About the only disadvantage is they may become a fire hazard during the dry season, but this shouldn't discourage you from using them. When it comes to nutrients, pine needles are a meager supply. They contain about 1/2 of 1 per cent nitrogen, and even smaller amounts of phosphorus and potash. Their main value lies in the organic matter. Don't hesitate to use

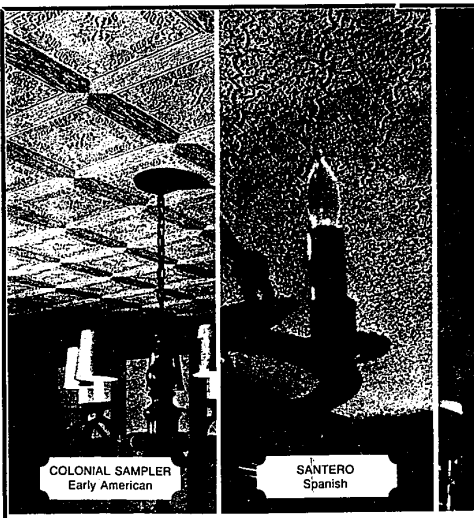
grass clippings for a mulch. Freshly cut, the clippings contain a very large percentage of nitrogen. **GREEN THUMB BONUS:** Want to know more about growing, harvesting and curing herbs? Send me a self-addressed, stamped envelope and ask for our booklet, "Gourmet Garden Guide." You'll need this for your green thumb library. Be sure to send a large (No. 10 or business size envelope) for your free copy.

## \$5,000 Prize For Child Photo Winner

Montgomery Ward's Wonderland center store is participating in a national children's photograph contest whose winner will receive a \$2,500 shopping spree and a \$2,500 college scholarship. Any child 14 years of age or younger may enter by having his photo taken at a participating studio prior to Aug. 12. Sponsor is the National Assn. of Department Store Photograph Studios. All contestants will receive balloons and lillipops as gifts. Selection of the winner will be based on beauty and personality as shown in the photograph. Judges will be five actors and comedians - Carol Burnett, Redd Foxx, Demond Wilson, Lee Grant and Tony Randall. Last year's winner was Matthew Winegar of Newark, Calif. This year's grand prize will be a \$2,500 scholarship to Emerson College, Boston, and the shopping spree.



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