

# The Green Thumb

By GEORGE ABRAHAM

Ever wonder why a big husky tomato plant will sometimes set only a few tomatoes?

The answer is temperatures, especially at night. When night temperature remains above 75 degrees or drops below 55 to 60 degrees F you get a poor set on your tomato vines.

For some reason, tomato flowers exposed to one or two nights of temperatures below 55 degrees will not be fertilized properly. About a week after the flowers have been opened, the old blossom drops off, leaving a stub with no tomato.

SOME VARIETIES (such as Fire-

ball, New Yorker and Springset VF, plus a few other early ones) seem to set at lower night temperatures and that's one reason why there are fairly consistent early types.

Peppers and eggplants have similar requirements for fruit set. There are other factors involved which might affect poor pepper set. Hot drying

winds during pollinating time is one of them. Some peppers still will set fruit in spite of temperatures and drying winds. Fern Weaver and Vineole are two peppers which set fruit consistently, regardless of temperatures. HOW ABOUT "too rich" soil or "too much nitrogen" you often hear about? Will these prevent fruit set on peppers, tomatoes and eggplants? Excess nitrogen will cause extra growth, but seldom does it cause blossom drop when night temperatures are just right. If tomato plants are in a rich soil and fruit set is poor, the plants grow fast and luxuriantly. A good set of fruit can slow down this rank growth, regardless of the amount of nitrogen there is in the soil.

ONE BIG PROBLEM with birches is the borer, a tiny pest which causes the top branches to start to die back. Adults lay eggs on the twigs or under the bark during late spring and early summer. The eggs hatch out into tiny grubs or larvae which burrow into the tree and girdle it, cutting off the flow of food and water from the roots.

This causes yellowing of the leaves at tips of affected branches, premature leaf drop and eventual death of affected branch.

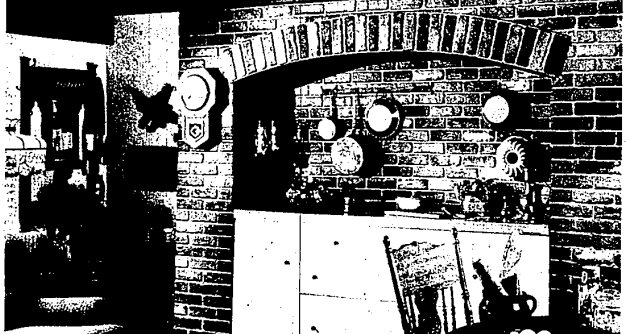
NOTE: The leaf twig dieback always begins in the uppermost parts of the tree and works its way downward in successive years.

Take a look at your birch limbs now and see if you can find a water-soaked stain. If present, take a pen-knife and probe the brownish stain and you'll see a small white grub (about 1/4 inch or so in length). This is the villain which kills the handsome birch.

CONTROL: It's not easy, but here are some tips for preventing birch borer infestation:

1) Keep tree well-watered and fed. Solutions of lindane or dieldrin should be sprayed around the first of June and again around the 10th of June—times when the adult insect is active. Spraying will not control insects already inside the tree, but it will prevent reinfestation. Systemics, applied into the tree, or in the soil, will not kill the borers.

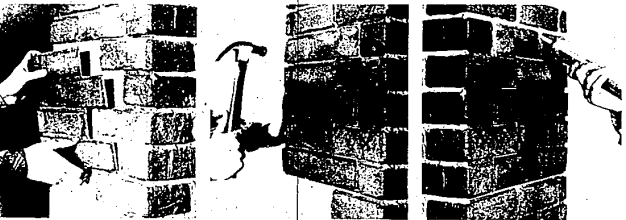
2) For trees already infested, prune out all infested branches and burn, if possible. Don't use infested wood in fireplace, as it harbors the pest.



## The country look

RUSTIC TOUCHES can be added to a kitchen or another room through the use of lightweight paneling "bricks" that can be cut to fit. Panels are nailed into place using a simple fastening system or they can be mounted with glues. Mortar is applied (bottom right) with an

ordinary caulking gun, filling cut edges and nail heads. This country look is created by using special panels made by Masonite Corp.; the panels are constructed of 80 per cent crushed limestone reinforced with fiberglass.

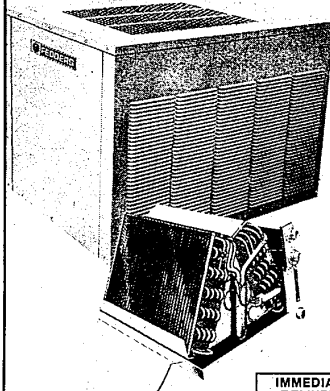


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