

DOWN TO EARTH

'False' Spring Brings Urge to Clean Yards

By ALICE WESSELS BURLINGAME
Special Writer for The Birmingham Eccentric

When should I "awaken" my flower garden this spring? When we have the first spring day, droves of citizenry will converge on their gardens and with a rake and basket will plunge into a great orgy of cleaning.

It is spring time and we moderns should count our blessings.

Let me repeat this warning to the gardeners: The first day you are tempted to clean your garden, just enjoy the ozone, and don't clean the garden that day; along comes the second day, whoa, not yet, don't accept this temptation either. It will really hurt because by this time your conscience will hurt you. Now, here you go. Along comes that perfect third day of temptation, that is the day to uncover, in a mild manner, your flower beds.

OF COURSE the litter you will accumulate in baskets will either be piled in your compost heap for future rich goodness, turned into humus, or you may spread this litter at the base of the shrubs to decompose if you do not have an official compost pile.

By using this technique in the future whenever you have to have a shovel full of black soil you are always rewarded by an available deposit of extra black soil around the base of shrubs, in the meantime the shrubs will benefit by the leaching of this soil down to the roots.

It is a good policy to leave flower beds devoid of a mulch until early July in order to allow the warmth to heat the soil directly and benefit the plant roots.

There are two schools of thought as to the advisability of incorporating spherules with the seed for your lawn. It is a legume and provides soil building vegetation which will stay green during the dry spells of the mid summer period and clover will take severe heat.

A roller should be used with judgment. Never roll when your shoe leaves an imprint in the soil. Your roller can be too heavy. Loam and heavy soils are damaged by the heavy packing of a heavy weight roller. Use a light weight roller to firm the uprooted tufts of grass which have been damaged due to the frost.

WALL GARDENS are being built by many new home owners to give interest to a sloping driveway or to ease the tension of a change of elevation from one piece of property to another.

If you are building with rocks up an embankment you always start at the bottom and pack your broken concrete or stone with a mixture of one third sand and two thirds leaf mold. Hold back on incorporating fertilizer because after all you want to keep the plants small.

A low-growing creeping evergreen at the top is a luxury item but does so much for the wall during the winter months.

Thyme is an herb which gives interest due to its texture. Among the other herbs you might like on the wall are chives which will have a purple flower, parsley, sweet marjoram and sweet woodruff. If your wall is near the kitchen door you might get a kick out of having that area planted to these herbs.

NOW FOR the general rock garden wall you will want to plan for a cycle of interest, so it will always be a place of beauty. Here are plants to incorporate in the

plan and their possible date of maximum interest:

March: Siberian squill (a favorite of mine), crocus.

April: Grape hyacinth, arabis alpina, iris pumila, primula veris.

May: Primula, creeping phlox, potentilla alba and aurea, sweet alyssum, candytuft, veronica.

June: Pinks, creeping baby's breath, campanula.

July, August, September: Lobelia, potentilla nepalensis (red).

October, November, December: Fall crocus.

INTERESTED for general seasonal appeal you will be interested in Iceland poppy (remember them on the slopes of the bank at Lake Louise), columbine, English daisy, violas, bedding petunias, ageratum, crystal palace lobelia (an electric blue), dwarf marigold, phlox drummondii, and amnesia (such perfect specimens all around Jasper Park Lodge).

Before you get too carried away with the spring weather this is a good time to look at your garden objectively.

Is it a burden to me? Do I resent the many hours I have to give for its maintenance?

If your answer is "Yes" then let's resolve that for 1954 this yard is to be designed for you. There isn't any disgrace to shrinking the area you have into flower beds and putting it into grass.

IF YOUR TIME is limited or the years have caught up with you, make a study of the interesting flowering shrubs where you pick a bouquet and have an artistic

effect without constant weeding and leaning over.

If you plant a ground cover, such as ivy in front of the shrubs, it will squeeze out the weeds and give a finished effect.

The cornelian cherry will begin soon to give its yellow flowers, then the magnolia, dogwoods, nanking cherry, forsythia, and on and on goes the parade of flowers, with the rose of Sharon near the end of the season.

Tree lilacs will flower in July. Very few folks around here have acquired themselves with this variety of the species, they need full sun.

Another thing, have a huge terrace, with trees and shrubs so placed to give you privacy and shade when needed.

Society deadline is 3 p.m. each Tuesday.

Completing Spring Practice Teaching

Among the 169 seniors who are completing their practice teaching requirements this spring is Alfred Worde, 380 Catalpa. He is working in speech correction at Kalamazoo public schools and Western Michigan college campus school.

Spring practice teaching is the final step before graduation and entering the field of school instruction.

Guild Plans Meet

An 8 p.m. meeting on April 8 is planned by members of St. Threse guild, Holy Name parish. Mrs. Edward Appell, 815 Forest, will be hostess of the evening.

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