

DOWN TO EARTH

Tropical Gardens Fascinate Writer

By ALICE WESSELS BURLINGAME
Special Writer for The Birmingham Eccentric

Timely tips are important right now.

When you grow seedlings inside you will find as the temperature goes up the plant needs more and more of the food it manufactures in its leaves for existence.

Therefore on dark days drop their temperature and even 45 degrees is not too chilly. The temperature near your spring seedlings inside will determine a great deal their strength.

There is a dwarf, red pigmy barberry which will not need pruning and is very hardy for our winters. It will look very nice in the foundation planting but remember it will need full sun to achieve its full color.

At this time we are planning to add many roses to increase the quality of our rose show.

In order for a rose specimen to achieve a national rating it must be tried in a two-five year test in an approved national test garden.

DURING THIS time it is scored on a basis of bloom production, color and form, habit of growth, vigor, foliage characteristics, stem quality, disease resistance and other important features of its natural growth.

From the hybrid tea category the white sleigh bells has a high score, golden anniversary is a high scored yellow rose. The rose-colored applause has an extremely high count.

Going on to the floribunda and polyantha class of roses where we can expect flowers from the middle of June until the second killing frost, the white favorite is summer snow. Bright eyes has a high rating among the yellow gold long flowering roses. Pinkie has a high rating among the pink floribunda while among the red-scarlet-crimson category the red pinocchio will be a must for you.

At Ohio State's trial garden they have found that the less the fall pruning the greater the bloom production the following summer.

WITH MOST of the hybrid tea and floribunda roses you should cut out the dead wood, remove weak and spindly canes in the spring. Then survey the rose bed and even up the canes to give a pleasing appearance.

For the climbers you remove the winter-injured wood, and after blooming, remove the older canes. In order to control insects and disease you should spray your roses as soon as possible after a rain.

Confessions may be in order. This column resumes its tempo at this point in Fort Lauderdale. After reading about the snow and cold temperatures in the north we feel mighty lucky to be enjoying hot days and daily swimming in the ocean.

A love of gardening has a way

of opening up many fine experiences for all followers.

IN NASSAU, the Royal Victoria gardens provided an arboretum with an open invitation for all visitors to enjoy.

There the famous garden planner, Donald Lawrence, is the chief consultant. He looks like Sherlock Holmes with his waxed mustache and as he strolls around this exotic collection of flora which provides a high umbrella of palms and unusual trees you have the feeling that you have arrived at paradise, only one hour by plane from Fort Lauderdale.

Lawrence related that in this exotic garden were many, many plants which would poison a person if taken internally.

He told us, "Many years ago I had my training at the University of Toronto and just before graduation we students who specialized in advanced botany swore by an oath that we would never pass on the information as to the identity of these poison plants to the public."

WITH A VERY wise twinkle in his eye he said near us was a plant and if one swallowed its seed one would die quickly.

As we walked up and down the paths, overhung with exotic tropical trees, orchids were on them, leaves of all plants were lush and you couldn't help but feel grateful for the moments spent with this botanist as one by one he unfolded the lore behind the introduction of numerous plants and rare specimens.

Lawrence cut off a leaf of the bitter Aloe, a houseplant which many Birminghamites enjoy. He peeled off the surface with a knife and at once it became very slimy.

HE INSISTED that I swallow a bit of it to see if I didn't have a new warm feeling in my tummy.

The marble leaved pothos, which is a vine many of us grow as a houseplant, will grow at least 35 feet tall up the tropical trees and the leaves will be 12 inches across and at least 12 inches long.

It did my heart good to hear Lawrence tell how important a compost pile is, in his estimation, for tropical gardening.

The soil there is very sandy and the incorporation of compost assures good plant performance during the very hot periods.

As you travel and observe the flora and garden design everywhere you may go you will realize how the fundamentals of good design in gardens is similar and when observed by garden planners in any climate assures the owner of flattering results.

Society deadline is 3 p.m. each Tuesday.

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