

Gardens Highlight Visit to Florida

By ALICE WESSELS BURLINGAME
Special Writer for The Birmingham Eclectic

The cold weather is an incentive for heading south. For the garden hobbyist there will be many treats because he will see many plants growing in the tropical setting which he will recognize as the houseplants he enjoys in Michigan. He will be alert to some of the garden designs he will feel can be adapted to our new way of living, casual and "easy does it."

The Edison Gardens in Fort Myers, is a "must" for the traveler on the west coast of Florida. There you will see rare and tropical gardens where Thomas Edison introduced plants from all over the world for the express purpose of discovering their economic use as adapted to this country. There you will see the stump from the first Australian pine that is ordered in America.

Bamboo trees border the property and Mr. Edison used this material (the fiber) for the first filament in the first electric light bulbs. To use it he sliced and charred the long fibers.

There, too, you will see a collection of 70 varieties of royal palms. You will see a banyan tree which was planted in 1925 and was two inches in diameter and four feet high. It is now 70 feet in circumference.

When you visit the Edison gar-

other animals. Even when being burned, its fumes are poisonous. Pineapples grow on a shrub about three and a half feet high and only has one fruit a year on a short stalk.

YOU WILL like the cypress tree with its beautiful yellow-green fernlike leaves. It is the slowest growing of all trees.

They featured the seagrape which bears fruit resembling sour grapes. The wood was boiled by the Indians to give a red dye. It grows in the fields all over Florida, like goldenrod does here in Michigan. The leaves are round and large.

I have noticed within the last three years that our local florists have introduced them as a houseplant. They will do well if you remember their natural habitat. They like a sandy soil, good drainage, plenty of sun and you will

be rewarded by the contemporary effect it can give you with its large leaf.

IN THIS Sunken Garden at St. Petersburg you will see the dumb cane plant which we use all the time up here as a houseplant called "difenbachia."

This plant has large leaves, is medium green and has a spotted leaf with cream coloring. If you chew the leaves of this exotic plant you will lose your power of speech for many days.

Am going to try an experiment as a garden hobbyist and you might like to get adventuresome too. I want to try growing miniature roses as a houseplant. Here is the technique, maybe you already have some in your yard you can dig up.

Plant them outdoors in the fall and have them dormant until January. Now they are brought in and

put in well drained humus. They should flower in six to eight weeks. You will want to place them in a sunny window.

HERE ARE some tips in the growing of houseplants you might like to digest. Plants which are drawn out of shape seeking the light and are lanky are susceptible to "damping off" which is a bacteria condition.

Houseplants prosper better when the temperature is cooler at night than in the daytime which assures periods of relaxing.

Plants constantly give off water vapor which sprays an invisible fountain into the air all the time. Now you can see why it is healthy to have plants in your living rooms.

MANY FOLKS wonder if gas is affecting their plants. Remember it is escaped gas which causes the trouble, not consumed gas. When gas is present African violets will not flower.

If you are in a quandary over the amount of escaped gas affecting your plants, go buy a carnation. Place it in water. If the petals curl inward and it wants to sleep right away you should have your gas

outlets checked. This flower is very sensitive to gas fumes. Perhaps the use of a carnation for this purpose could be compared to taking a canary into a mine to test the quality of the air.

When you allow your houseplant leaves to be dirty it is true that the pores are congested, but more important is the fact that dirty leaves cut down the amount of light reaching the plant. Light is the power plant which keeps the development program in action for all green material.

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MRS. GRANT HAROLD, retiring president of the Newcomers club, presents the gavel to Mrs. Bruce Emmert, newly elected president. Standing by is Mrs. Allen Otto, vice-president, who will automatically become president in six months. The group's bi-annual election was held last week at the Community House. Other officers are Mrs. Dayton Slater, Jr., secretary, and Mrs. Alfred Ryan, treasurer. Regular meetings of the club are held the third Thursday of each month at 12:30 p.m. at the Community House. A bridge and canasta group meets the first Thursday, while a bowling team is active on Tuesdays.

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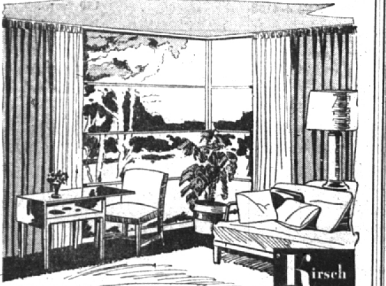
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