

DOWN TO EARTH

# Sky Scraper Delphiniums Mark Local Garden

By ALICE WESSELS BURLINGAME  
Special Writer for The Birmingham Eccentric

While driving home from Ann Arbor on the Pontiac Trail the other day I passed some property owned by a utility company, an area enclosed by a link fence. A nice effect was created by planting red barberry bushes at regular intervals in front of the fence as well as red blaze climbing roses, then in flower. This provided an outstanding combination of two plant materials which may suggest a solution to a planting problem for a local gardener.

Also, at the corner of Withers and Adams in Detroit, I observed the healthiest massed grouping of plants with very shiny leaves you will want to see. They were five leafed araliae.

This medium colored dense leafed shrub will tolerate the worst of situations found in a city area and will really prosper in a north location.

It is the perfect shrub to place in planters in front of stores and is good for parking lots and gas station areas.

It would mean a great deal to the beauty of our town if business places would select plant material which would not disappoint them and would add to the property.

MANY PERSONS are restrained from gardening activity due to skin allergies, poison ivy, oak and sumac. Recently there has been developed a coating which can be applied for three and four hours protection in the garden as well as when enjoying outdoor hiking.

This is the time to spray your lawns with 2-4-D to get rid of the weeds. This mixture is a hormone mixture and when the solution hits the core of the weeds it makes the cells of the weeds swell to bursting.

The cycle often takes about three weeks before the weeds have disintegrated and gone back into the soil, but within a few hours you will notice the core of the weed gets a light green appearance.

At this date, too, you will want to spray a mulch over flower beds and around evergreens to prevent further summer weeding. When it gets real hot the mulch will hold the moisture and keep the "feet" of the plants cool.

MULCH MAY be peat moss, buckwheat hulls or fine sawdust which has had one cup of all purpose fertilizer added per bushel. Two inches deep makes the optimum coverage.

You will be delighted with the appearance of the flower buds, wedding days will be over. Don't stir up the mulch until about the middle of next April when it will be pretty well disintegrated into humus due to winter leaching.

Recently I had the good fortune to visit the garden of Lee Schowalter, 1562 Fairway. Here we have an architect who enjoys his office in his home and the resultant rest breaks in his garden for inspiration in his creative profession.

The Schowalter home is a cream colored ranch type nestled on a lot with artistic plant material. As an accent on the front lawn with the house as a background, is a purple leaf plum.

To the right of the driveway is a beautiful blue spruce. On the garage, which joins the house, are hanging containers with geraniums.

THE SPECIALTY of this garden enthusiast is delphinium and it is not uncommon for his plants to be seven feet, six inches tall. Schowalter has experimented with a method to retain the blossom heads for a longer time due to their exotic effect and has found that there is a hormone spray which can be used, a teaspoon to a gallon of water.

His delphiniums have four cycles of flowering, managed by pinching off all sucker flower buds, allowing only the terminal flower buds to mature.

It is important that these plants be in full sun and with plenty of ventilation around the roots. Therefore, up to 12 inches from the ground, strip off all leaves so only the bare stems show. Plants so stripped will grow high. For support he secures a three eights inch iron rod, eight feet tall for wind support. This iron rod will allow plants to have some graceful swing with the wind.

After flowering cut back to within an inch of the ground to cause a succession of flowering. The second crop will be about five feet, the third crop will be about four feet. The fourth crop of

flowers will bloom after frost time.

THESE PLANTS should only be one row deep. Schowalter allows the plants to be in their place four years then he rips them out to plant new seedlings which he starts himself. The plants are never allowed to mature over four stalks. They are planted 30 inches apart and in August the seed for next year is planted, not over an eighth of an inch deep.

"Do not spare the peat moss," says this specialist.

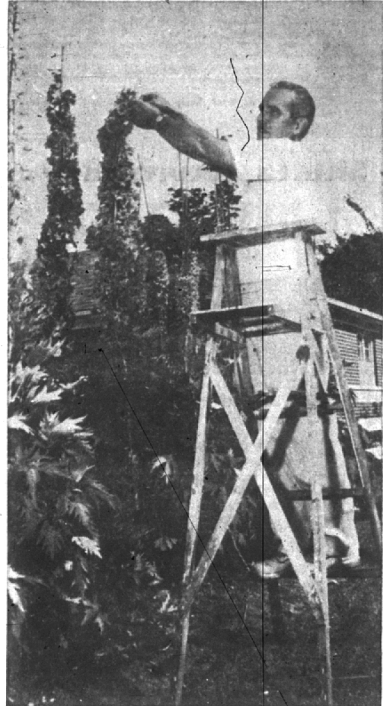
Pansies are beautiful in the Schowalter garden and have come in for some study as to the best culture.

In June he cuts off the old part of the plant and encourages new growth. He grows on a narrow

strip on the south side next to the house foundation. They seed themselves so he never has to place new plants.

FLOWERING plants in the Florida room over the winter months are handled on a dolly of three quarter inch plywood faced with flat screen madding. Placed on the dolly is a metal tray the same size with a one inch lip.

In our community we have many plant fanciers who have been captured by the beauty of a given plant category and have learned all there is to know about how to do a top job of cultivation. The nice part of talking with them is that they have thrown in a lot of new ideas, developed outside of the books.



GOING UP! The Delphinium plants grown by Lee Schowalter are really "way up in the air," making necessary the use of a step ladder when any need for bloom care arises. The gentleman who lives at 1562 Fairway, has been kind enough to make his "recipe" for the big plants public, as described in the adjoining column of Mrs. Alice Wessels Burlingame. (Eccentric Photo)

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