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DOWN TO EARTH

Tree Peonies Offer New Garden Adventure

By ALICE WESSELS BURLINGAME
Special Writer For The Birmingham Eccentric

The other day at 1934 Derby I saw a ranch architecture home, well done.

The lawn appeared to have very good texture and after a good lawn is important to give a setting for a lovely yard as well as show off the home.

There were two purple leaf plums placed as sentinels 10 feet from the front porch. I liked their wide selection of plant material which avoids a "busy" effect. There were window boxes beneath the two large front windows.



Mrs. Burlingame

Folk have a way of shying away from tree peonies as a new adventure in growing plants. This is too bad. This type of peony has a woody stem and does not die back in the winter.

Tree peonies came to us from Japan and Europe. They require the same setting as regular peonies: good drainage, deep cultivation and lots of organic material in the soil. Sun is essential at least half of the day. Just for fun why don't you try this type of plant in 1955?

SOME OF OUR readers have the problem of having to plant a step bank to hold the soil. There is a disease-free trailing rose which has small white flowers in June and lots of fruit in the fall. There is another with pink flowers. I would be inclined to try, called Max Graf.

When you are planting a bank with roses to control erosion, plant the bushes three feet apart and mulch with a six inch layer of straw.

Some residents have become alarmed about the premature dropping of tree leaves. This can occur when the water supply becomes short and the older leaves "wear out." Sometimes, in extreme cases, at least 60 percent of the total will fall due for this reason. A high organic fertilizer has been found to be helpful in such instances if used at the onset of a dry spell.

Mrs. George Goodwin on East Pointe Lane has been enjoying an oddity with a diffebachia she is growing in their home.

As a rule these grow three feet high and from time to time drop the lower leaves in the normal growth cycle. This plant has the short-coming of eventually being too heavy.

Often the owner will plant

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a high knoll and ending at a creek bed.

The home in this setting is charming and designed to be in with the natural views. It is a colonial farmhouse type.

Beside the lovely lounging porch is a low bush cranberry hedge, which grows in three quarter shade and two or three feet high.

To the left of the home is the large garden plot accented with fieldstone walls, just a collection of stones from the fields.

Schumaker pointed out his Australian pine which seems to be receding from a nearby oak. He said he had observed this behavior before when the two kinds of trees were near each other.

THE TURF has a quality of thickness to make all gardeners envious. To begin with, the whole area was hard clay, so they had 100 loads of bog dirt spread over the surface, then a rototiller churned this down throughout the clay. Now the lawn is only fertilized once a year. The entire property has 78 "stations" for the automatic sprinkling system and the water from the creek is the source of supply.

Mrs. Schumaker has combined choice iris and lilies for a pleasing effect. I saw her summer snow white floribunda rose which was filled with an abundance of flowers and was truly "wedding white."

Coral pink phlox were very important in the perennial garden. Along the fence was an old-fashioned honeysuckle in full flower, giving generous dividends for this date. It is from the garden of Schumaker's mother.

Each garden should always have some specimen plant material from an important garden of your past. It provides that spiritual something related to a beautiful garden.

FRUIT TREES have a wire netting around the bottom to ward off the rabbits. The vegetable garden was very prolific, and of

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