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DON'T KILL YOUR PLANTS BY OVER-WATERING

Most potted plants purchased from a florist or retail store have been grown in greenhouses under ideal conditions. When they are placed in home environments designed for people, not plants, they need good care to adjust to the new environment.

Watering—Houseplants are probably killed or injured more often by improper watering than by any other single factor. No general schedule can be used for watering all houseplants. Size of plant, pot, light, temperature, humidity and other conditions influence the speed with which the soil mass dries out.

When to water—In general, flowering plants need more water than foliage plants of the same size. Never water any plant unless it needs it. Soil kept either too wet or too dry causes plant roots to die, which leads to poor growth or death of the plant. Never allow plants to wilt, and never allow them to stand in water for long periods of time.

Learn to gauge the moisture content of the soil by its color and feel. As the soil surface dries, it becomes lighter. Under continued drying, the soil begins to crack and pull away from the sides of the pot. When severe drying occurs, some damage already will have been done to the roots. Soil kept too moist becomes sticky and slimy, thus inviting root rots and other disease problems.

Kinds of water—Ordinary tap or well water is usually satisfactory for plants. Chlorine and fluorine often added to city water do not harm plants. Rainwater and melted snow are excellent water sources. Water run through most water softeners, however, should not be used continuously for watering potted plants.

How to water—Plants may be watered from either the top or the bottom of the pot. If you prefer watering from the top, use a watering can with a small spout and keep as much water off the foliage as possible. Each time, wet the entire soil mass, not just the top inch. Add water until it comes through the drainage hole in the bottom of the pot. Discard water that remains beneath the pot one hour after watering. Salts may form a white accumulation on the soil surface if plants are watered regularly from the bottom. Occasional watering from the top helps wash out the salts. Don't allow the soil to reabsorb any water that has been run through the soil to leach out salts. If surface salt accumulation becomes too heavy to remove in this way, scrape off the surface soil and replace it with fresh soil. Try not to injure plant roots.

Drainage—Potted plants should always have good drainage. Occasionally, the drainage hole may become clogged by roots. Check it by pushing a finger, stick or pencil into it. Even if drainage from the pot is good, pot coverings can

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hold water. Pots wrapped in waterproof foil or placed in deep planters should be checked occasionally for standing water. Plants with "wet feet" soon look sick, leaves yellow or drop, flowers collapse, and normally healthy white roots turn brown. Any or all of these symptoms can result from stagnation of the water, too little soil oxygen and development of diseases that rot the roots.

SOURCE: Caring for Houseplants, Dr. David Trinklein, <http://extension.missouri.edu/p/G6510>.

ALL-AMERICA SELECTIONS INTRODUCES NINE EXCITING AAS WINNERS FOR THE 2016 GARDEN SEASON

Anyone watching the movements of All-America Selections lately will notice an ever-increasing number of exciting and wonderful plants that are being named AAS winners. This announcement is no different with nine new plants that have been trialed by horticulture experts throughout North America and deemed worthy of the All-America Selections® brand.

All of the following new varieties were trialed during the 2015 growing season and exhibited outstanding garden performance as noted in each of the following descriptions.

This grouping of AAS Winners for 2016 includes:

- Geranium Brocade Cherry Night (National)
- Geranium Brocade Fire (National)
- Pepper Cornito Giallo F1 (National)
- Pepper Escamillo F1 (National)
- Pumpkin Super Moon F1 (Regional: Southeast and Great Lakes)
- Salvia Summer Jewel™ Lavender (Regional: Southeast, Heartland, Great Lakes)
- Strawberry Delizz® F1 (National)
- Tomato Candyland Red (National)
- Tomato Chef's Choice Green F1 (National)

With this announcement, these varieties become available for immediate sale to the commercial market. Brokers and growers can purchase these varieties immediately. Retailers and consumers will find these winners for sale for the 2016 gardening season as supply gradually becomes available throughout the chain of distribution. Garden communicators are free to begin writing about these varieties now, in preparation for next year's gardens.

The first group of AAS Winners for 2016 was announced this past July and are also interesting additions for the consumer's gardens and table:

- Bunching Onion Warrior (Regional Winner: Southeast, Mountain/Southwest)
- Mizuna Red Kingdom F1 (National Winner)
- Radish Sweet Baby F1 (Regional Winner: Southeast, Great Lakes)

Source: <http://all-americaelections.org/>

LIGHTING VERY IMPORTANT FOR HOUSEPLANTS

Houseplants are popular indoor decorations. Attractive and constantly changing, they add a softness of line and provide a bit of nature indoors. However, the ideal location of a plant for decoration may not be the ideal spot for plant growth. Lack of adequate light is the most common factor limiting the growth of plants in many areas of the home. Supplementary electric lighting is usually the easiest and least expensive way to provide enough light for plants that do not receive adequate natural light.

Why do plants need light?

Light provides the energy plants need to make the food required for them to grow and flower. Plants are the only organisms able to use light to produce sugars, starches and other substances needed by them as well as by other living organisms.

Is light color important to plants?

Certain colors in light rays are important for proper plant growth. Leaves reflect and derive little energy from many of the yellow and green rays of the visible spectrum. Yet the red and blue parts of the light spectrum are the most important energy sources for plants, and plants require more rays from the red range than from the blue. Plants growing outdoors, in greenhouses or close to windows are exposed to a natural balance of the blue and red light rays that plants need. Where plants receive little or no natural light, you must provide additional light from artificial sources.

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Which types of lights are best?

As a single light source for plants, incandescent light bulbs are not particularly good. They are a good source of red rays but a poor source of blue. They produce too much heat for most plants and, if used, must be located some distance from the plants, thus reducing the intensity of the light the plants receive. They are also about one-third as efficient as fluorescent tubes in converting electrical energy to light. Furthermore, a standard incandescent bulb's life is often only about 1,000 hours, whereas a fluorescent tube's life is normally 10,000 hours or more.

Fluorescent tubes provide one of the best artificial light sources available for plants in the home. Other light sources such as sodium-vapor and metal halide lamps may be used but are not as readily available or adaptable for home use. Fluorescent tubes are made in many sizes and shapes: circular, U-shaped, square or straight. Straight tubes in 2-, 4- or 8-foot lengths are used most frequently.

How far from light should plants be placed?

Most plants should be located with the tips of the plants 6 to 12 inches from the light source. The intensity of light drops rapidly as the distance from the light bulbs or tubes increases. Plants receiving no outdoor light should be lit from 16-18 hours each day. If additional light is received, 12-14 hours each day may be adequate.

SOURCE: Light Indoor Houseplants, Dr. David Trinklein, University of Missouri, <http://extension.missouri.edu/p/G6515>.

GREAT PLAINS GROWERS CONFERENCE

Registration is open for the 20th annual Great Plains Growers Conference, Jan. 7-9, 2016, at Missouri Western State University in St. Joseph. Extension educators from Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, Nebraska and South Dakota will offer workshops for horticulture producers. The event is open to the public and covers topics to interest backyard gardeners as well as commercial produce growers. Topics cover not only vegetables but also tree fruits, mushrooms, small fruits and flowers. There also are presentations targeted toward organic growers.

For the first time, the conference will feature several workshops on mushrooms. Mark Gleason of Iowa State University will provide morel mushroom certification training. Anyone wishing to sell wild-harvested morels in Missouri must be certified as an inspector by an approved trainer. Gleason regularly provides this training in Iowa, and a number of Missourians have traveled to Iowa to get this training. We're bringing him to the conference so people can get that certification training and be able to legally sell morels in Missouri. If you want the state-required certification letter at the completion of the workshop, it will cost an additional \$50.

There will also be a class for those interested in harvesting wild mushrooms for personal use. Correct identification is vital because some mushrooms are deadly and making the wrong choice can be life-threatening. Stan Hudson, with the Missouri Mycological Society, will discuss Missouri and Midwest mushroom identification and how to spot dangerous look-alikes. There are also presentations for those who would like to grow shiitake and other specialty culinary mushrooms.

Other sessions will cover greenhouse and hydroponic production, cover crops and soil health, and scaling up your horticultural enterprise. Larry Connor will present a Thursday workshop on beekeeping. Connor was an extension agricultural entomologist with Ohio State University and ran a bee breeding program in Florida. He owns Wicwas Press, a publisher of books on beekeeping. Connor will discuss problem recognition with bees, queen management in hives, queen rearing, and plants attractive to bees for nectar and pollen, and other topics.

Keynote speaker on Friday is Anthony Flaccavento, an organic farmer from Virginia. There will be five concurrent tracks to choose from on Friday: Market Ready, Tree Fruit, Beginning Organic, Vegetable IPM (integrated pest management), and a "mixed bag" track covering technology, equipment and irrigation.

On Saturday, concurrent sessions will cover Small Fruit, Advanced Organic, Vegetable Production, Cut Flowers and Food Safety/ Good Agricultural Practices. There will be exhibitors for seeds, irrigation, horticulture equipment, chemicals and more. Meals, refreshments and handouts are included in the conference registration fee. For more information, call MU Extension in Buchanan County at 816-279-1691. You may also register online and find more information at www.greatplainsgrowersconference.org.

MU Extension, Lincoln University, University of Nebraska, South Dakota State University Extension, Kansas State University Research and Extension, and Iowa State University Extension and Outreach sponsor the event.

GARDEN TIPS FOR JANUARY

ORNAMENTALS:

- Brush off heavy snow from trees and shrubs
- To reduce injury, allow ice to melt naturally from plants.
- Check stored summer bulbs such as Dahlias, Cannas, and Gladiolus to be sure they are not rotting or drying out.
- Limbs damaged by ice or snow should be pruned off promptly to prevent bark from tearing.
- Sow pansy seeds indoors.

HOUSEPLANTS:

- Wash dust off plant leaves on a regular basis. This allows the leaves to gather light more efficiently and will result in better growth.
- Set pots of humidity-loving house plants on trays filled with pebbles and water.
- Kill mealy bugs on plants by wiping them off with a cotton ball soaked in rubbing alcohol.
- Insecticidal soap sprays can be safely applied to most house plants for the control of many insect pests.
- To clean heavily encrusted clay pots, scrub them with a steel wool pad after they have soaked overnight in a solution of 1 gallon of water, and one cup each of white vinegar and household bleach.

MISCELLANEOUS:

All Month

- Store wood ashes in sealed, fireproof containers. Apply a dusting around lilacs, baby's breath, asters, lilies, and roses in spring. Do not apply to acid-loving plants. Excess ashes may be composted.
- Check fruit trees for evidence of rodent injury to bark.
- Avoid foot traffic on frozen lawns as this may injure turf grasses.

Week 1-2

- Christmas tree boughs can be used to mulch garden perennials.
- If you didn't get your bulbs planted before the ground froze, plant them immediately in individual peat pots and place the pots in flats. Set them outside where it is cold and bury the bulbs under thick blankets of leaves. Transplant them into the garden any time weather permits.
- Seed and nursery catalogs arrive. While reviewing garden catalogs, look for plants with improved insect, disease, and drought-tolerance.
- Old Christmas trees can be recycled outdoors as a feeding station for birds. String garlands of peanuts, popcorn, cranberries, and fruits through their boughs.

-Missouri Botanical Garden-

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI
 Extension

Garden Talk!

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UPCOMING EVENTS

February 20: Beginning Beekeeping workshop, 9am-5pm, Macon High School Cafeteria. Sponsored by the North Central Missouri Beekeepers Association. Cost is \$40 and includes lunch and materials. Call Crooked Hill Beekeeping at 660-214-0132 to register. Seating is limited.

Spring 2016: I will be doing some horticulture workshops in the spring in the counties I cover. Dates are not set yet. I am open to topics and format, so if you have a suggestion email or call me.

June 1: Beekeeping year 2 class; this is an advanced beekeeping class for those that have already been through year 1 of beginning beekeeping. It will be held in Macon, MO. No registration details available at this time. Registration will take place sometime in mid to late April. Just mark your calendars now!

