

How to buy houseplants

By John Hughes
Extension Horticulturist
Ontario Ministry of
Agriculture and Food

BRAMPTON—The popularity of tropical green plants has increased drastically in Ontario during the past few years. Most department stores, grocery stores, cash and carry outlets, and conventional retail florists have recognized the consumers' increased interest in plants for the home.

As a result, these shops now stock a large quantity and selection of foliage plants. But there have been problems, at wholesale and consumer levels, with the selection and care of these plants.

There are three basic items to consider when buying a plant—source, soil mix and plant appearance. A plant will have either 'happy' or 'sad' signs to warn you whether your dollars will be well-invested.

The source is the most controversial consideration—whether the plant was grown here in Ontario, or imported from one of the southern states (usually Florida). A plant grown in Ontario will outperform and outlast a Florida-grown plant in your home. To understand why, we must consider how the plants grow.

Simply, green leaves absorb sunlight and produce food (carbohydrates) that the plant utilizes to grow and maintain itself. At a certain level of sunlight, enough food is produced to maintain the plant. This is called the plant's 'compensation point'. If a plant receives less light, it will die. If it receives more, the extra food produced will be utilized for growth.

A plant, grown under high light conditions (such as in Florida) will have a higher compensation point than the same type of plant grown under lower light conditions (such as in Ontario). When an Ontario homeowner buys a plant and subjects it to the reduced light in the house, the plant with the lower compensation point (the Ontario-grown one) will outperform and outlast the competition.

The soil mix is a much more obvious factor to consider. Close to one-third of the total volume of the pot should be air space. This provides essential oxygen to the roots for good plant growth. The finer the soil mix (such as fine sand), the closer the particles lie together, so less air is available. The coarser the particles in the soil mix, the more air available, and the better the plant response.

More houseplants die from overwatering than all other factors combined. Air spaces in the soil mix fill with water and exclude essential oxygen. Once the roots start to brown and die, your plant will show typical yellowing and wilting symptoms.

Before buying a plant, take a small portion of the soil out of the pot and examine it closely. If you observe a fine sand, be very cautious. Chances are the soil mix is not porous or well-drained. Fine sand is also a common ingredient in Florida-grown plants.

An avid green-thumber often chooses plants by appearance. Yellowing bottom leaves are symptoms of unhealthy roots caused by a poor soil mix, overwatering and/or excessive fertilizer salts in the soil.

Browning leaf tips can be caused by red spiders, fluoride damage, low humidity and/or overwatering.

Excessive leaf drop is often a plant's response to moving

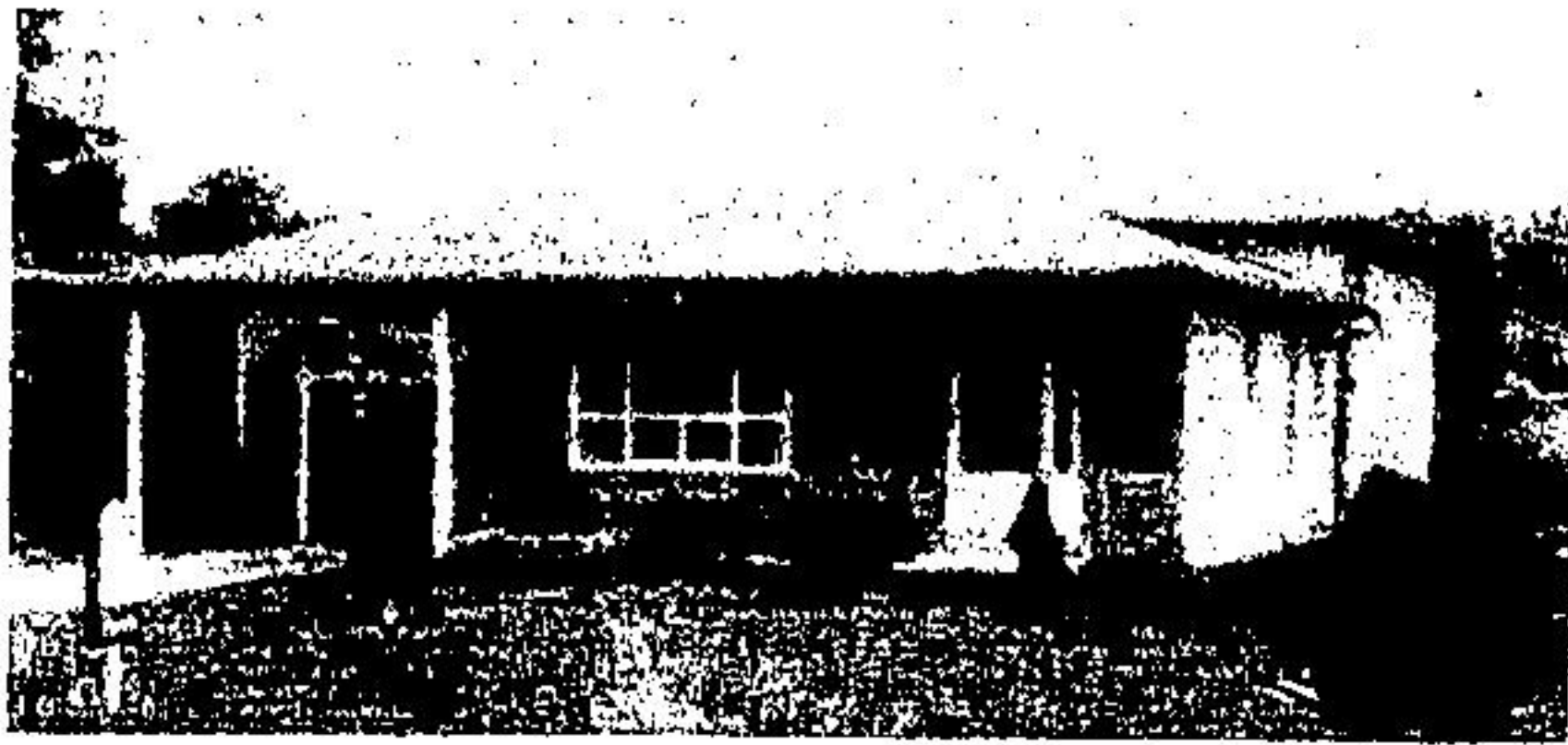
(Continued on page 6)



Saxe

Stephen P. Saxe Limited Realtor

877-2219 or 453-1111 TORONTO LINE



\$59,900.

3 bedrooms, living, dining room, eat-in kitchen. View family room from kitchen for easy supervision of children. Carport. Call Coring DePaoli.

COMMERCIAL STORES
4000 sq. ft. \$1650 per month
900 sq. ft. \$375 per month
1500 sq. ft. \$113 per month
All properties net.
Call Tom Cooper or Eleanor Langdon.

BUY YOUR OWN GARAGE!
3 bays, Shell gas pumps, all equipment included, paved lot good outside storage, office, income from apartment. Located in Georgetown. Asking \$135,000.00. Call Tom Cooper or Rozetta Stolp.

GOOD OPPORTUNITY IN RURAL AREA
73 Acres of land with bank barn, approximately 40 acres of good workable land, balance is mostly cedars with pond sites. An ideal location for your hobby farm just 20 minutes from Georgetown and close to paved road. Asking \$87,500. Call Norm Sinclair.



\$56,900.

This 2 storey brick home has 2 self-contained apartments and has recently been improved with a roof, wiring, aluminum soffits, fascia and eaves. Centrally located to schools, shopping and all amenities. For your exclusive viewing call John Caton.

TALL PINE ESTATES

Don't miss it. Exclusive park area with very unique homes. Right now 1 home open for inspection. Exceptional "curb appeal" as well as host of well-thought-out interior amenities. Note the outstanding workmanship. Drive by tonight or better still call Robin Fischer or Eleanor Langdon to tell you more about them.

These homes are sold. Only 2 lots left to choose from to move in before Christmas! Come and see the plans.

Lot 12—\$109,800—4 bedroom 2080 sq. ft., walkout basement, ground floor laundry, Dormer roof-line.

Lot 11—\$108,800—4 bedroom side split. 2-4 pc. washrooms. Contemporary design.

Lot 6—\$105,800—3 bedroom side split. Walkout family room. No crawl space. Double car garage.



1.3 Acres \$108,500.

This 3 bedroom split level has a unique lay-out, great for entertaining. The dining room and kitchen are on one level with a walk-out to a huge back yard. Just minutes from town but quiet country living. Priced at \$108,500. Call Robin Fischer for an appointment.



\$168,000.

RECREATION & PRESTIGE!

3 Acres northwest of Georgetown with a 280 degree view of rolling pasture land. The house has everything to make it comfortable in winter, spring, summer or fall so all you have to do is call John Caton and I'll be there, to show you your future home.



\$59,900.

A fenced yard for the kids, central air conditioning to beat the heat, deck, living room, dining room and eat-in kitchen. Three good sized bedrooms upstairs in this semi. Call Eleanor Langdon.



Semi \$49,900.

Then find out more about this home. It is not only amazingly spacious and very clean but has 3 bedrooms, living and dining room, eat-in kitchen, 2 bathrooms and garage. Too good to pass by. Call Rozetta Stolp.

Stephen P. Saxe Limited, Realtor

170 Guelph Street, Georgetown, Ontario

Tom Cooper, F.R.I. 877-9620

John Caton 877-6564

Norm Sinclair 877-6050

Robin Fischer 877-7194

Eleanor Langdon 877-2493

Howard Caton 838-2708

Coring DePaoli 877-7976

Rozetta Stolp 877-2180

Don McMillan 854-2436

Wendy Saxe 877-2984