

## Gardening can be indoor fun

Try carrying garden activities indoors to entertain the children on a rainy day or on wintery weekends, says Ruth Friendship, rural organizations co-ordinator (horticulture) for the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food's rural organizations and services branch.

Try growing alfalfa sprouts for a sandwich, starting seeds in an egg carton, growing radishes in styrofoam cups or sprouting an avocado pit or a sweet potato.

Beet and carrot ends can be

rooted in sandy soil and water respectively.

Cut the green beet tops to one centimetre (about half an inch) and the carrot tops to seven cm (about three inches).

Place the beet ends in sandy soil and the carrot ends in water in a shallow dish, cut side down.

Place the dishes in a window sill receiving indirect light.

Water the beets frequently.

When green shoots appear, move the mini-gardens to full sun to generate new leaves.

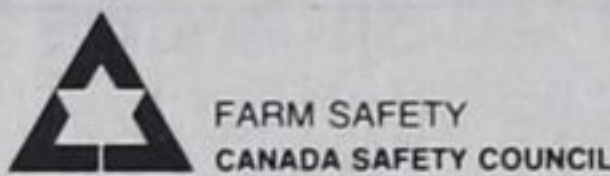
## They're just too darn weak!!

When canning, never use recycled mayonnaise or instant coffee jars because they are too weak to withstand the pressure and heat of process-

ing, says Foods and Nutrition Specialist Monica Beaumont with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food's rural organizations and services branch.



Watch where you're going! Stay alert for roadside hazards and obstacles.



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## Give your lawn a jump

Give your lawn a jump on spring by dividing your fall fertilization program into two parts.

Late August to mid-September is the best time for the first application of fertilizer, says Ruth Friendship, rural organizations specialist (horticulture) with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food's rural organizations and services branch.

"This first application stimulates healing and fall growth and should contain nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium in a 4:1:2 ratio," she said.

The second application should contain a high percentage of nitrogen (or it can be

100 per cent nitrogen) and is applied in late October to early November.

This application is called a "winterizer" or dormant application.

"By dividing the fertilizer program in this way, the average home owner can maintain the green colour of his lawn until the snow fall and prompt the colour to return quickly the following spring," she said.

In some cases, late fall mowing (about November 1) will allow the green colour to appear earlier in the spring.

For more details on lawn care, consult the ministry's publication No. 448, available at local OMAF offices.

## Dying house plants?? Water to the rescue!!!

Low humidity is a common problem in homes, especially during the winter months.

And it is one of the chief factors responsible for failure in growing houseplants, says Ruth Friendship, rural organizations co-ordinator (horticulture) for the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food's rural organizations and services branch.

Humidifiers or air conditioners improve the moisture content of the air.

Pans of water placed on radiators or hot air registers can also help.

Misting with water is beneficial to many plants. But don't mist plants with hairy or fuzzy leaves such as African Violet or Begonia because the hairs trap the water droplets, encouraging disease to develop.

As well as water in the air, plants need water in their growing media.

Lack of water can check growth, cause leaves to fall off and produce unsightly plants with dull unattractive foliage.

On the other hand, too much water can cause a lack of oxygen in the soil and promote the death and decay of roots and plant parts at the soil level.

So when and how often should you water? Once a day? Or once a week?

"Plants should be watered according to their individual requirements based on en-

vironmental conditions, type and size of plant, kind of growing media and the container size and type," Friendship says.

During hot, sunny days, plants require more frequent watering than on cool, cloudy days.

When watering, always add sufficient water to wet the soil right to the bottom of the pot.

The appearance of the soil surface usually indicates when water is required — but don't be fooled.

Some growing mixes will dry out quickly at the surface, while remaining wet deeper down.

So use your finger to check the soil farther down in the pot and check the drainage hole(s) to see if the soil is wet at the bottom of the pot.

If the pot is made of clay, tapping the side will indicate the dryness of the soil inside; a dry pot will give a clear ringing sound when tapped, while a pot filled with wet soil will produce a dull sound.

## The government challenge is there

The agricultural challenges facing government cannot be

ignored or brushed aside. With tremendous agricultural resources to work with, good

farmers and fully 25 per cent of the world supply of fresh water, Canada has much poten-

tial. The federal government has a major responsibility in

seeing that we realize that potential.

## A bath to dye for and add life with

It's difficult to dye a dark fabric a lighter colour, says Clothing and Textiles Specialist Margaret Loewen of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture

and Food's rural organizations and services branch.

A colour remover helps but even then, it's not always possible to achieve a lighter colour.

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