

Let some light in

region gardener

In the garden
By Marion Bluegrass

Sometimes, the spot you have for a house plant just doesn't afford enough light to keep it looking its best.

You can boost the numbers of hours, or the intensity of the light your plant gets, by letting it spend some time under artificial light.

You can erect a florescent fixture above the plant where it's to stay permanently, or you can remove the plant to a basement garden centre with artificial light for some hours each day.

Artificial lights are also used satisfactorily to start new plants, or to force a plant into bloom. Your nearest garden centre or nursery should be able to supply you with the proper bulbs and instructions for use.

Soils are another, and more obvious, requirement of any plant. It doesn't have to be real soil, though!

Artificial soil mixtures have become increasingly popular in recent years, and with the right amount of fertilizing, can be used to grow almost anything.

Most of us, however, prefer a mixture of good, sterilized, potting soil, and one or more of the artificial soils. Half and half potting soil and vermiculite or perlite is, I find, a healthy blend for most plants.

Don't use soil out of the garden unless you're prepared to put it in your oven and sterilize it so no insects or diseases or weeds get a chance to flourish and damage your plants.

Unlike the other factors we've discussed here for the past couple of weeks, fertilizer isn't essential for most plants during the winter months. They don't get enough light at this time of year to grow rapidly, so too much fertilizer is detrimental rather than beneficial.

If you've got an adequate sized pot that allows for the plant to obtain nourishment you shouldn't need to fertilize at all.

If you do think your plants need an extra little chemical "snack," be sure you're very sparing.

Make up a weak solution of water-soluble fertilizer and never use it more than once a month.

If you want to re-pot a plant into a bigger pot, don't go from a 3 inch pot straight to one that's 12 inches.

Work up gradually, by potting the plant in successively bigger pots, each time allowing the plant to establish itself and grow larger.

If you have questions about your plants, send them to Marion Bluegrass, c-o The Liberal, Box 390, Richmond Hill.

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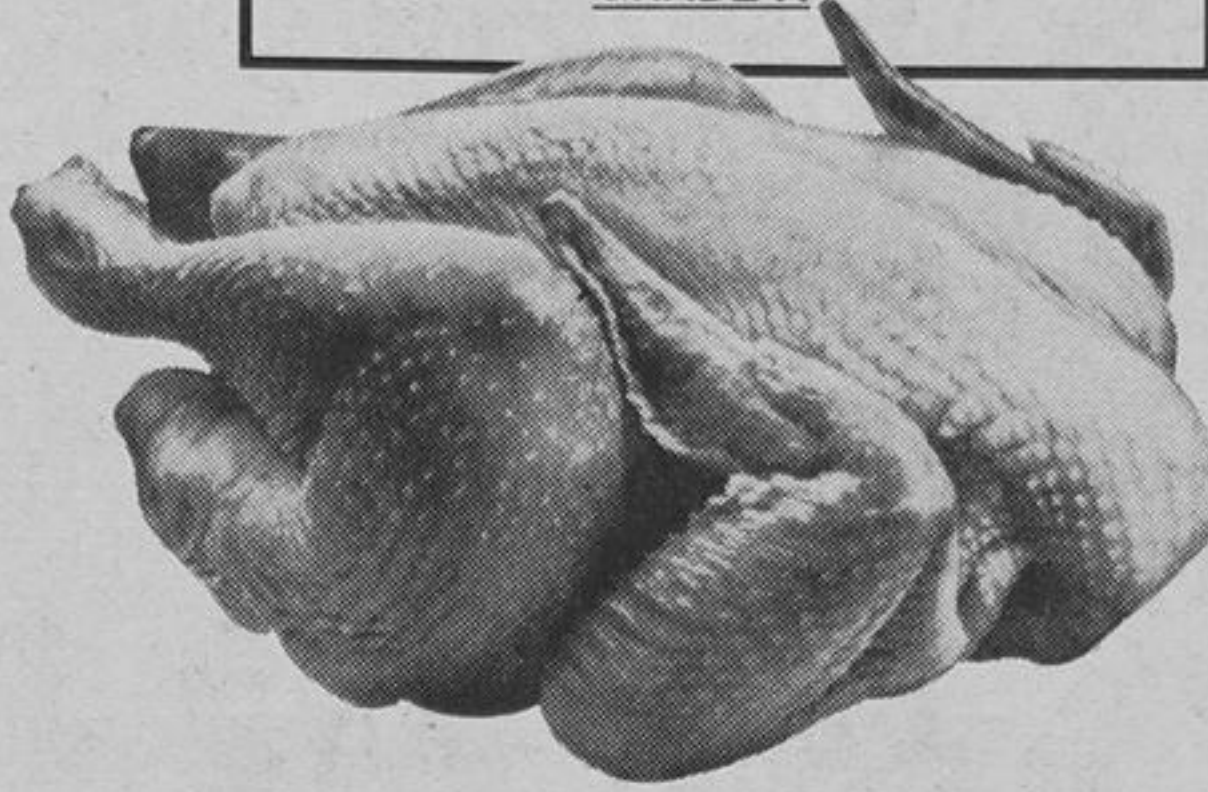
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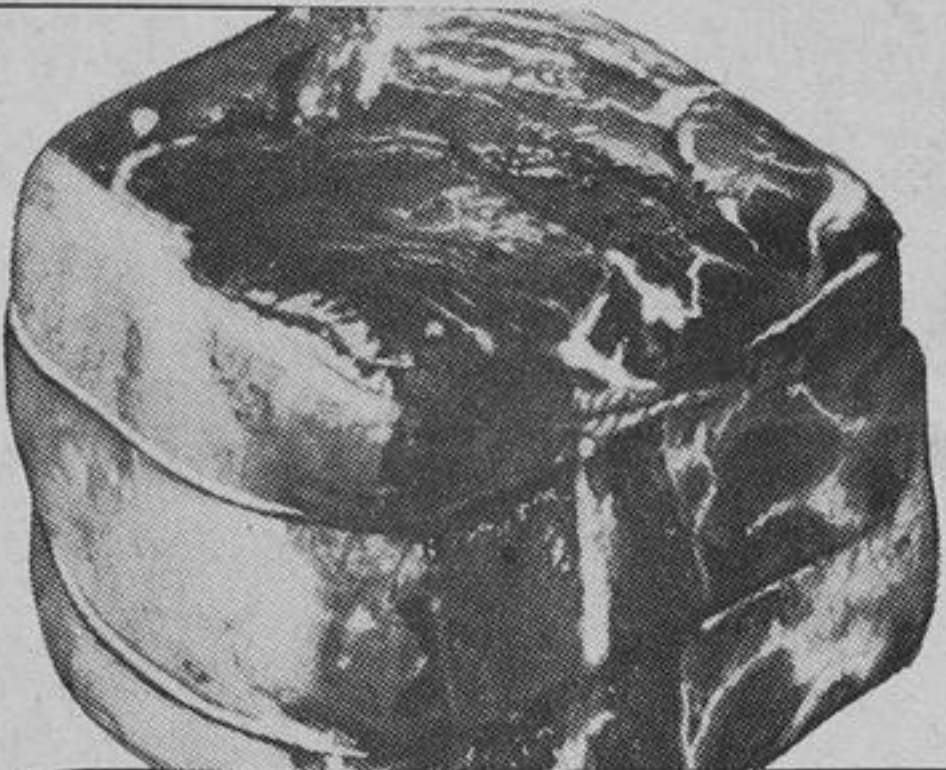
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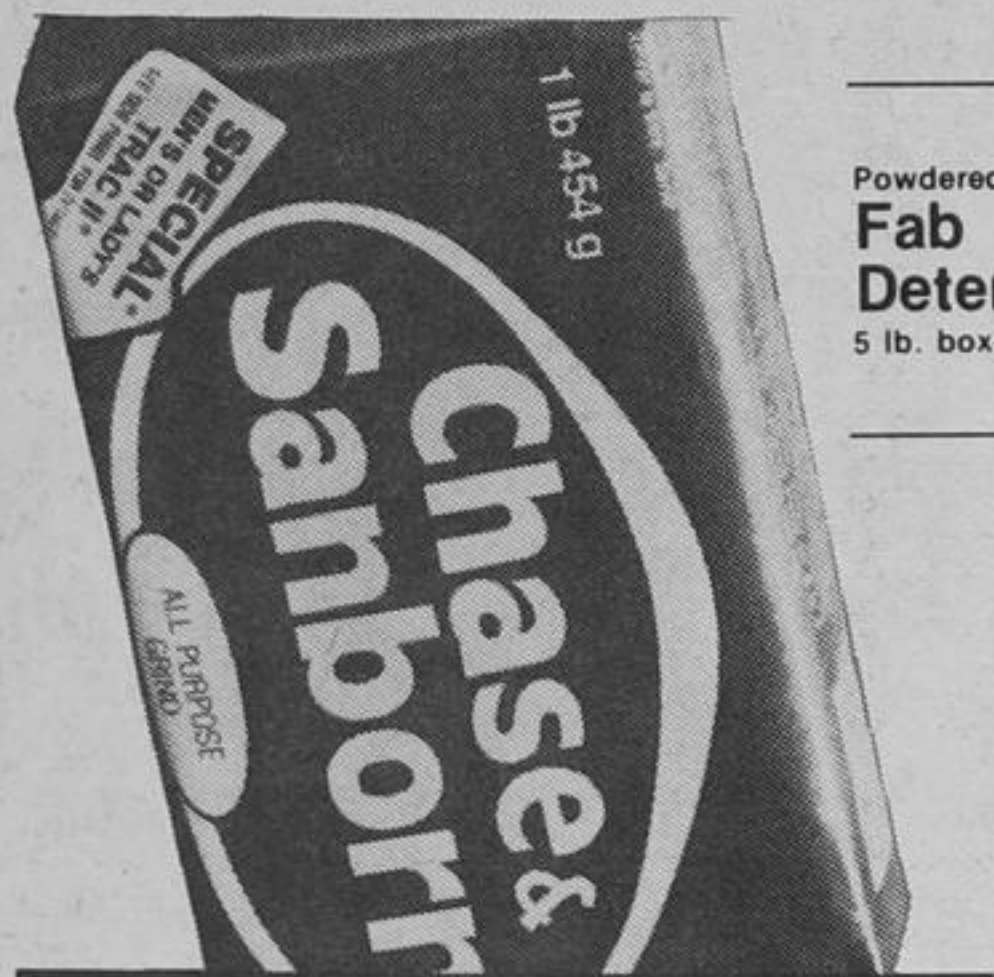
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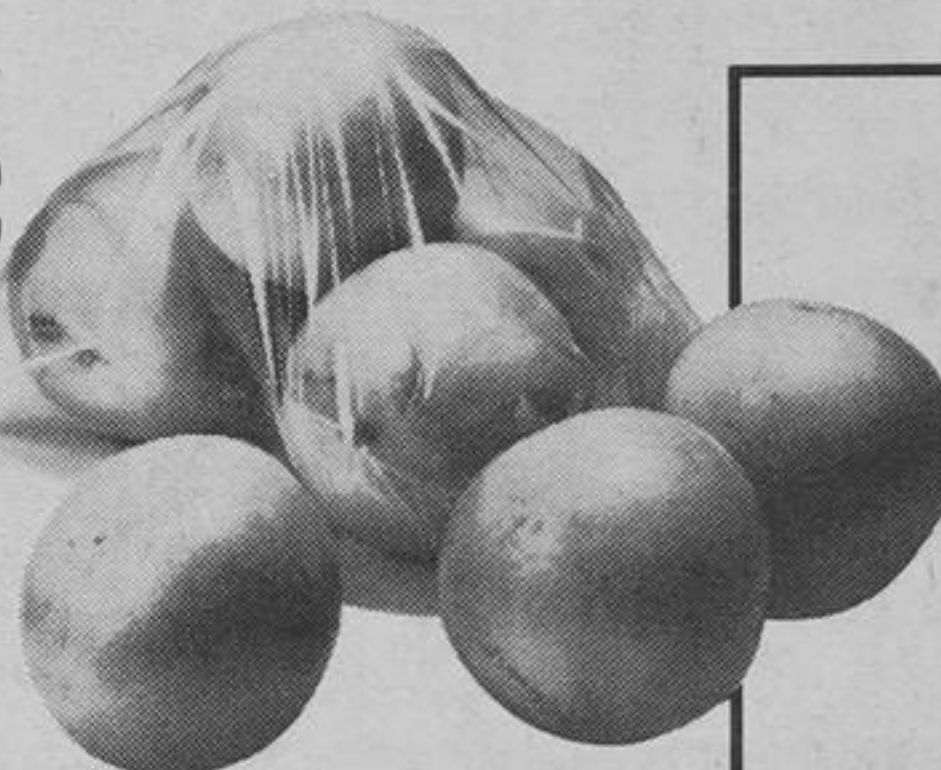
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