

## Grow a Christmas gift

There is still time to start propagating plants for gifts in time for the holiday season, says Tony Hogervorst, rural organizations co-ordinator (Ontario Horticultural Association) with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food's rural organizations and services branch.

Coleus, fibrous or pot begonias, wandering Jew, and English or German ivy are some of the many plants which can be propagated from slips, he says.

Begonias can be rooted from a single leaf, but Hogervorst says cutting a piece of stem with a leaf helps the plant root more quickly.

For coleus, wandering Jew and ivys he suggests cutting the tip of a healthy plant with three or four leaves. Cuttings should be rooted in perlite

and peat moss mixed in a 50-50 ratio or rooted in a mixture of coarse sand and peat.

"Beginners should steer away from using vermiculite as a rooting medium because it may pack and remain too moist," he says.

The rooting medium should be moist enough to hold together when squeezed, without water loss, throughout the rooting process.

Optimum temperatures range from 18 degrees Celsius to 20 degrees Celsius (65 degrees Fahrenheit to 68 degrees Fahrenheit). The cuttings also require plenty of light, but direct sunlight is not necessary, he says.

Growth rate of the cutting depends on the type of plant being propagated. The ones mentioned above should be started now to be ready for the Yuletide season, he says.

## Gold coins an appropriate present

This Christmas it will be possible for many people to receive a gift of special significance - the gift of gold.

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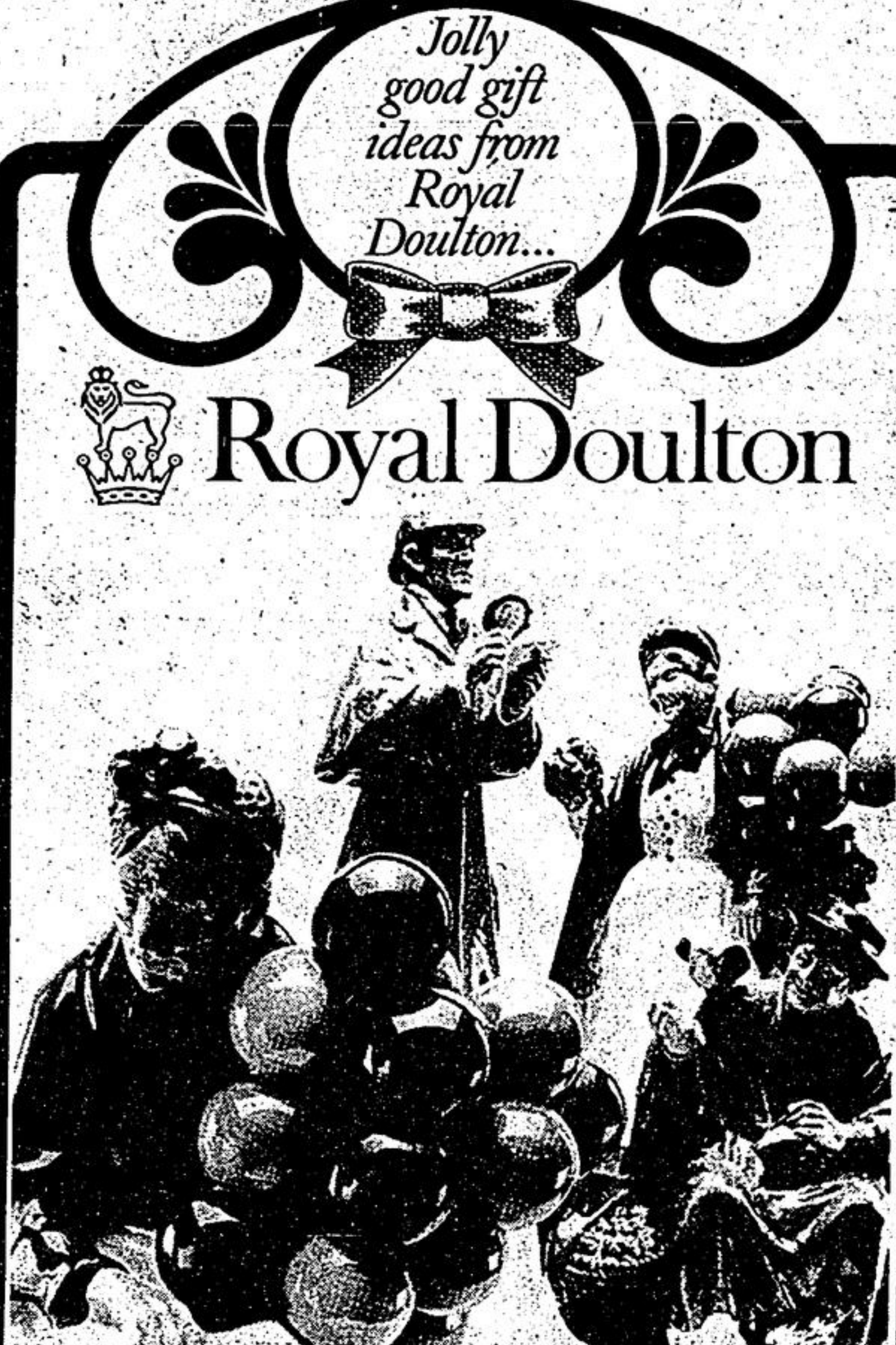
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